Men-at-Arms

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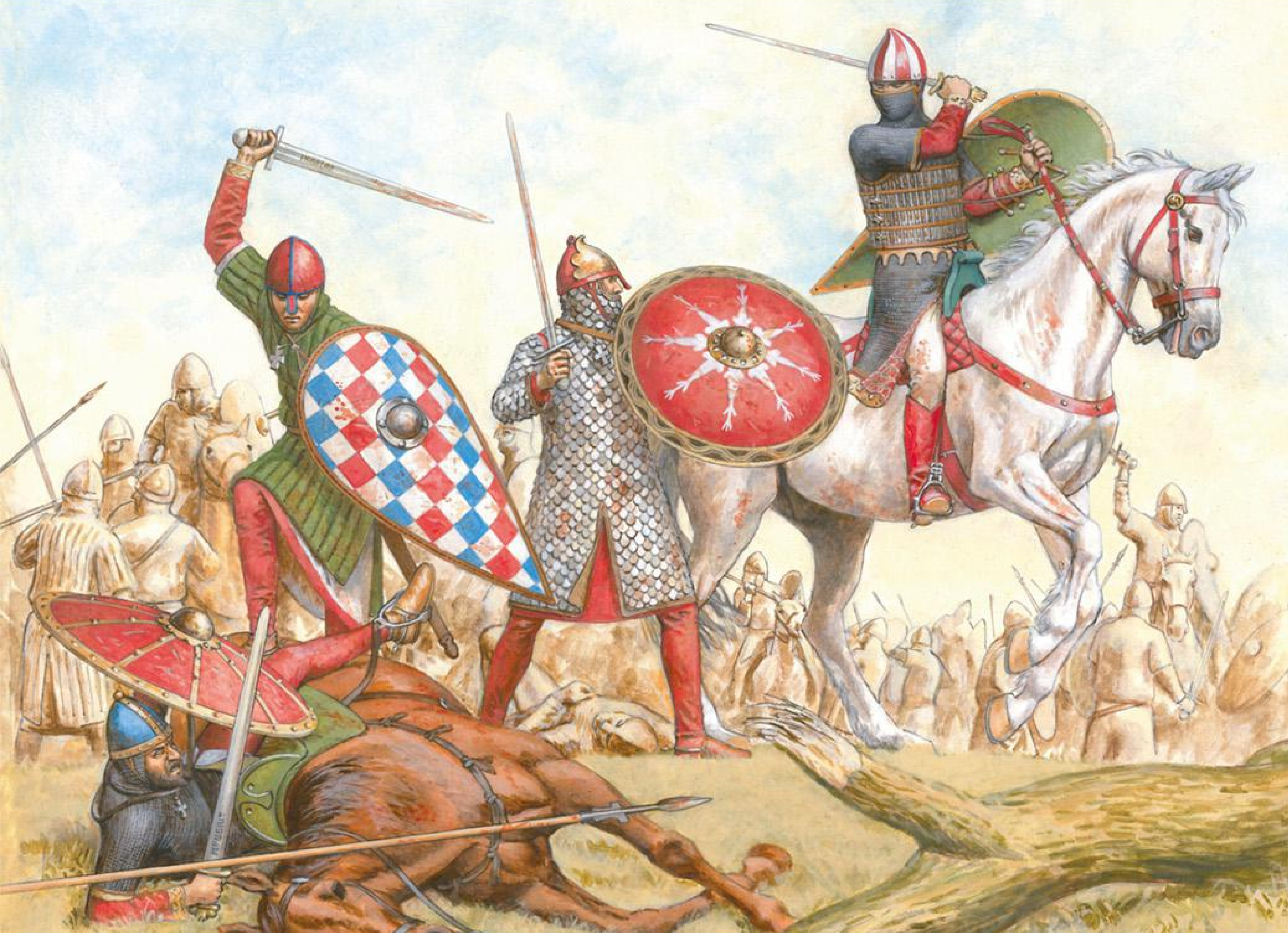
The Normans in Italy 1016–1194



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Men-at-Arms • 533

The Normans in Italy 1016–1194

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Series editors Martin Windrow & Nick Reynolds

To Sebastiano Tusa: ***sit tibi terra levis***

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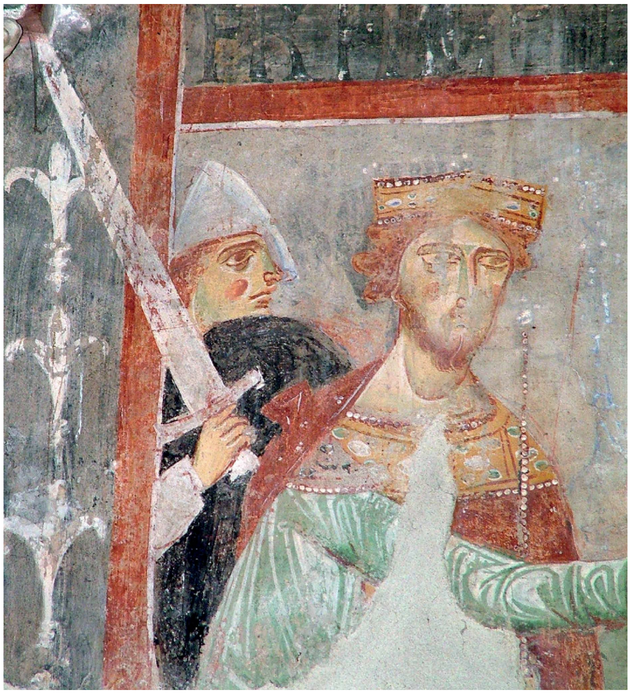
THE NORMANS IN ITALY 1016–1194

INTRODUCTION

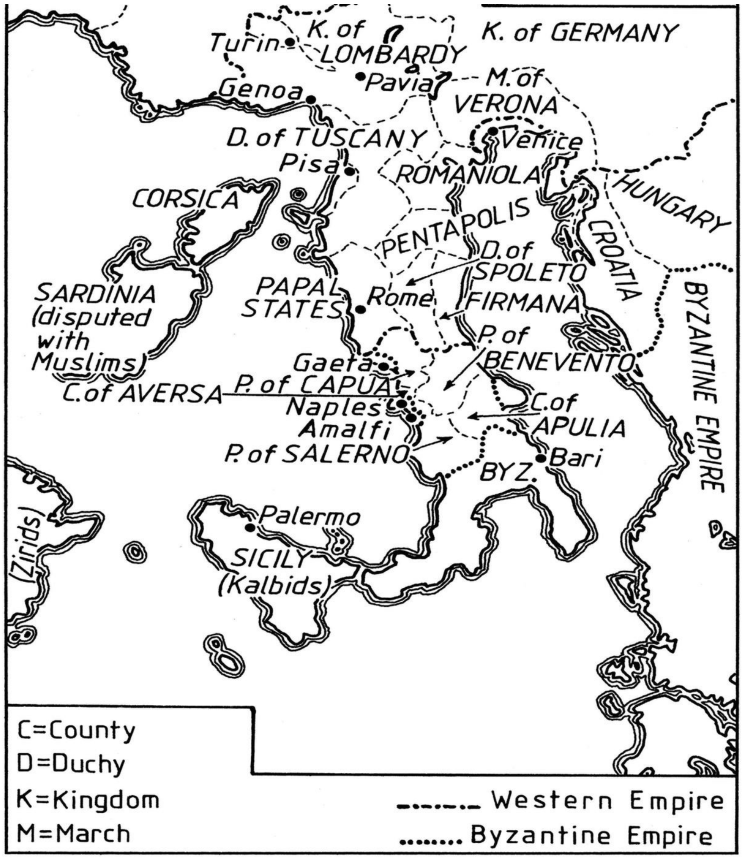
The fighting men who, early in the 11th century, abandoned Normandy to travel hundreds of miles to southern Italy – at first in search of mercenary employment, and later of lands – were the restless descendants of the pagan Vikings who had settled in northern France a century before. (Recent studies of the DNA of the population of Normandy reveal that in some areas the Scandinavian contribution still exceeds 50 per cent.) Over a hundred years, this Viking heritage blended with the local Carolingian model of social organization to produce a Christian and progressively centralized feudal state, the Duchy of Normandy. As the land-holding class outgrew the available territory, and the dukes enforced their central authority, this people's warlike energy and pragmatism were the basis for Norman conquests in England, southern Italy and Sicily during the next 200 years.

Returning pilgrims carried reports of Italy's fragmented complexity, which offered promising opportunities to bold warriors who had initiative, but no inheritances. The northern half of Italy was then part of the 'Roman' (not yet 'Holy', and in practice, Germanic) Empire, except for the Papal States around Rome itself. The south was divided between the Eastern Roman Empire (directly governing Apulia, Basilicata and much of Calabria); Lombard principalities (Benevento, Capua and Salerno); petty coastal duchies (Amalfi, Naples and Gaeta) nominally under Byzantine rule; and Sicily, ruled by Muslim Arabs.



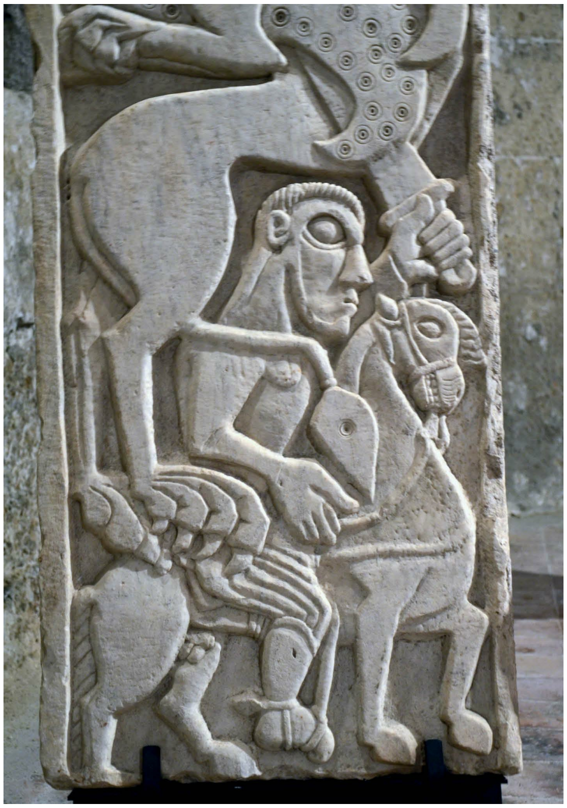
Detail from fresco of *c*.1087 showing King Herod with his guards, made by Byzantine artists brought from Constantinople by the Benedictine Abbot Desiderius. The guard wears a helmet similar to the well-known specimen from Olmütz, Moravia, now preserved in the Hofjagd- und Rüstkammer, Vienna. It is of one-piece construction, with a slight medial ridge and an integral nasal. Very few such helmets are visible on the Bayeux Tapestry, which mostly shows segmented *Spangenhelme*. On an ivory panel of this same subject dated to *c*.1077, now in the Salerno Diocesan Museum, the guards wear both body armour and head protection of scales, showing central vertical grooves. (*In situ,* Church of St Angelo, Formis, Capua; author's photo)

In 1017, one Robert de Tosny, castellan of Tillières-sur-Avre, led his followers south when he fled the anger of the Duke of Normandy, and was advised by Pope Benedict VIII to enrol as a mercenary with the Lombard lords. When another refugee from the duke's justice, Osmond Drengot, reached Benevento with his four brothers and perhaps 250 men, the local prince entrusted them with the custody of a stronghold. At this time, the *Rhomaioi,* or 'Greeks' as Italians called them (hereafter in this text the 'Eastern Romans') were regaining ground previously lost to the Lombard duchies. The latter quickly recognized the military value of Norman mercenaries, and hired them to protect Lombard territory against the *Rhomaioi* and occasionally against the Muslim 'Saracens'.


K. of LOMBARDY
K. of GERMANY
Turin
Pavia
M. of VERONA
Genoa
D. of TUSCANY
Venice
Pisa
ROMANIOLA
HUNGARY
CORSICA
PENTAPOLIS
CROATIA
D. of SPOLETO
SARDINIA (disputed with Muslims)
PAPAL STATES
Rome
FIRMANA
BYZANTINE EMPIRE
P. of BENEVENTO
Gaeta
C. of AVERSA
P. of CAPUA
Naples
C. of APULIA
Amalfi
P. of SALERNO
Bari
BYZ.
(Zirids)
Palermo
SICILY (Kalbids)
C=County
D=Duchy
K=Kingdom
M=March
Western Empire
Byzantine Empire

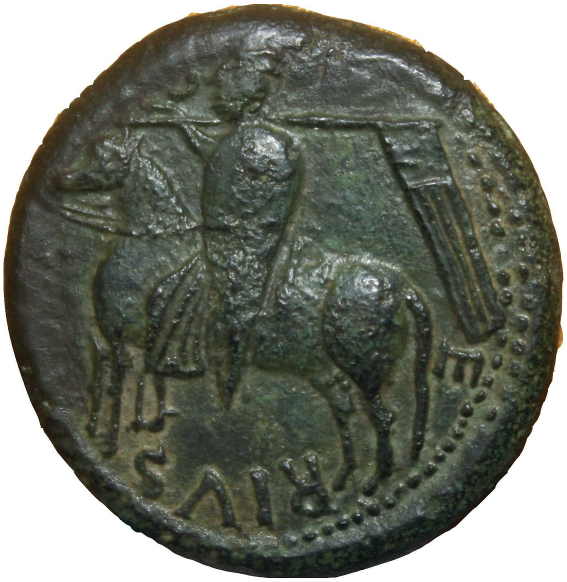
On this sketch map, the region of Campania lies on the western coast around Naples, Amalfi and Salerno. The county of Ariano lay roughly east of Naples. The region of Calabria occupied the ‘foot of the boot’, with its capital Reggio near the ‘toe’. (Map by David Nicolle)

According to Raoul the Glaber and the late 11th-century poet William of Apulia, reports of successful exploits and the prospect of generous earnings and loot soon attracted increasing numbers of Normans, sometimes together with their women and children, with the express agreement of Duke Richard II. Rainulf Drengot, a brother of Osmond, sent back messages boasting of the beauty and fertility of Apulia, whose location in the central Mediterranean also brought it wealth from trade.



This precious marble slab from Aversa, fief of the Drengot family, was carved shortly before 1090, and seems to echo the Normans' Norse heritage. It probably represents the warrior Sigurðr killing the dragon Fafnir, a myth which coalesced with that of the Christian St George. The mounted warrior has the back of his head shaved, in the style typical of the Norman men-at-arms portrayed in the Bayeux Tapestry. He is bare chested, but wears apparently striped trousers and soft boots with prick-spurs. The horse's forelock and harness also recall those in the Tapestry. (*In situ,* Aversa Cathedral; author's photo)

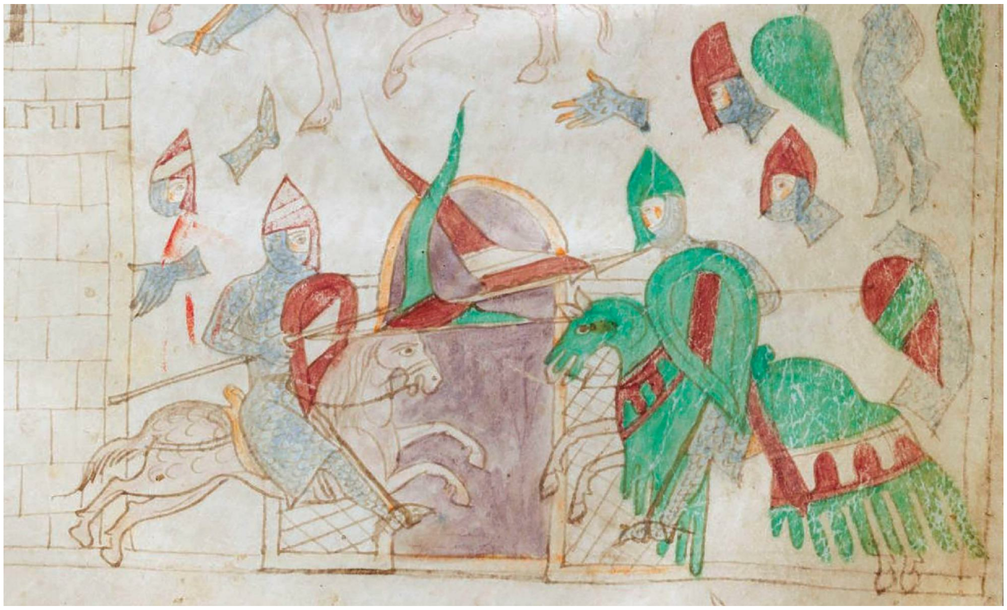
The pressure of a birthrate that was outstripping the land available in Normandy is exemplified by the case of Tancred d'Hauteville (980–1041), an obscure nobleman living near Coutances. Tancred had no fewer than five sons from his first marriage and seven from his second, but under the law of *jus majoratus seu primogeniturae* only the firstborn could inherit his Norman estate. Thus the cadet Hauteville brothers 'by mutual agreement... having initially left their homeland and searched for profits through various weapons in various places, finally reached the Italian province of Apulia, guided by God'. Eventually, eight of Tancred's 12 sons would seek their fortunes in southern Italy, and the tangled family tree of Hauteville rulers would dominate its history for generations.



Trifollaro minted in 1098 at Mileto in Calabria by Count Roger I and depicting him mounted. Both a 'kite' shield, and a lance-pennon with four long, squared streamers, are visible on this copper coin. (Museum of Norman Civilization, Ariano Irpino; author's photo, courtesy of the Museum)

The arrival of these formidable warriors allowed a revival of previously lapsed Lombard politico-military activity on the southern Italian chessboard – but before long these hired mercenaries were acquiring their own hereditary fiefdoms, and the Italian nobility who had employed Normans to win their battles were gradually being displaced themselves. Within the area south of a line from the Tronto to Rieti and on to Terracina, the resultant pattern of wealthy Norman holdings coalesced into a unique kingdom that proved able, for 200 years, to challenge the might of Byzantium, the German Empire, and Islamic potentates.

Indeed, men such as Richard of Aversa, William 'Iron Arm' d'Hauteville, his half-brothers Robert 'Guiscard' and Roger, Guiscard's son, Bohemond, and after them King Roger II of Sicily, created in this region a political entity which would actually survive, under different rulers, for fully 800 years – whether as 'the Kingdom of Sicily', 'the Two Sicilies', or simply as the *Regno* or 'Kingdom'.



Detail from a manuscript miniature by Pietro da Eboli, *c*.1197, showing Count Richard of Aversa assaulting Capua in 1062. Note the classic Norman ‘nasal helmets’, the painting of the shields, and the horse-trapping. (*Liber ad honorem Augusti*; Bern, Burgerbibliothek Ms. cod. 120/II; Wikimedia Commons)

CHRONOLOGY

AD 962 Otto I, King of Germany, is crowned Emperor in Rome, thus uniting Germany and northern Italy.

982 Failure of Eastern Roman invasion of Arab-ruled Sicily.

999 First reference to Norman pilgrims in southern Italy.

1016–18 First accounts of Norman mercenaries fighting in southern Italy, for the Lombard rebel Melos of Bari against Byzantium.

1018 The rebels are defeated by a Byzantine army near Cannae in Apulia.

1030 In return for aiding the Papacy against Capua, Rainulf Drengot receives the fief of Aversa in Campania.

1038–40 Normans fight with Lombards in Byzantine employment in Muslim Sicily, but later withdraw, and rebel.

1034–40? Arrival of brothers William ‘Iron Arm’ d’Hauteville (before 1010–46) and Drogo d’Hauteville (c.1010–51) in Apulia.

1041 Lombard-Norman revolt against Byzantine rule; Lombard leaders are bought off, but Normans begin the conquest of Imperial territories in southern Italy. Led by William d’Hauteville, they win three consecutive battles at the Olivento River (17 March), Montemaggiore (4 May) and Montepeloso (3 September), and capture Melfi in Basilicata as their base.

1042 Normans elect William d’Hauteville as their count, in alliance with Rainulf Drengot; Prince Waimar of Salerno recognizes their conquests and grants them fiefs.

***c.*1044** Arrival of William’s brother Humphrey d’Hauteville (c.1010–58).

1046 Death of William, succeeded by Drogo as ‘Count of the Normans in Apulia and Calabria’.

1047 Arrival of Drogo’s half-brother Robert ‘Guiscard’ (‘the Cunning’ – c.1015–85).

1051 Drogo is assassinated by local enemies; he is succeeded by Humphrey.

1053 Norman army led by Humphrey, his half-brother Robert Guiscard and Richard Drengot of Aversa (*c.*1049–78) decisively defeats papal coalition army at Civitate, and captures Pope Leo IX.

1056–57 Humphrey dies of disease; Robert Guiscard's younger brother Roger d'Hauteville (*c.*1040–1101) arrives in Italy.

1059 Robert Guiscard is invested by Pope Nicholas II (24 June) as Duke of Apulia, Calabria and Sicily (though the latter is still in Muslim hands), and Richard Drengot of Aversa as Prince of Capua (still in Lombard hands). Reggio capitulates to Guiscard after Eastern Roman garrison is withdrawn. First expedition to Sicily organized under Guiscard's brother Count Roger and Godfrey Ridel.

1062 Richard of Aversa takes Capua after three-year siege.

1063 In Sicily, Count Roger wins battle of Cerami.

1071 Normans capture Bari, seat of last Eastern Roman governor in Italy, thus completing conquest of mainland.

1072 In Sicily, Count Roger takes Palermo.

1073 Normans capture Amalfi.

1075 Normans side with Pope Gregory VII in his dispute with German Emperor Henry IV.

1076 Normans capture Salerno.

1078 Normans capture Benevento.

1081 Guiscard leads expedition to Byzantine-ruled Balkans.

1082 Battle of Dhyrhachium (Durres, Albania); Byzantine Emperor Alexius I Comnenus defeated by Normans under Guiscard and his son Bohemond of Taranto.

1084 In support of Pope Gregory VII, Normans raise the Emperor's siege of Rome, but then sack the city.

1085 Robert Guiscard dies of fever at Kefalonia; Bohemond returns to Italy. Count Roger supports his nephew Roger Borsa against Apulian and Calabrian rebels, and retakes Palermo in Sicily **(1086).**

1090–91 Count Roger takes possession of Malta from Muslims.

1091 Normans effectively complete conquest of Sicily.

1094 Norman civil war between Roger Borsa, younger son of Robert Guiscard; his half-brother Bohemond; and his brother-in-law William de Grandmesnil.

(1095–*c.*1136 Heavy involvement of Italo-Normans in crusades to Holy Land. Most settle in principality of Antioch, founded by Bohemond of Taranto in 1098.)

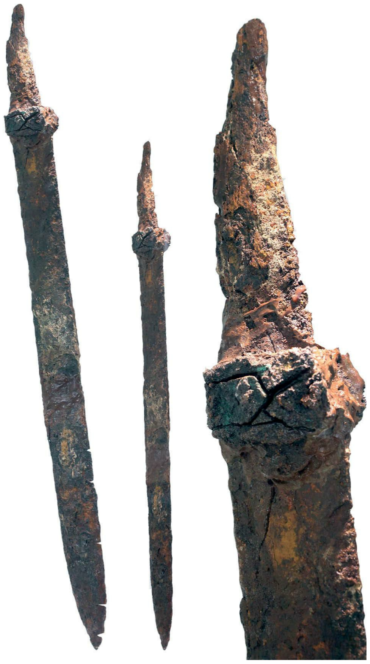
1101 Death of Count Roger I. Decades of confused warfare follow, between his son Roger II (1098–1154) against local rivals and, at

various times, the Papacy, the Empire, and Byzantium. Roger II rules Sicily from 1105, and Apulia and Calabria from 1130.
1130 Roger II establishes his Kingdom of Sicily, also incorporating his southern mainland territories.
1139 Roger II is finally recognized by the Papacy as King of Sicily.
1140 Naples officially passes under Roger's rule.
(**1140–52,** successful naval campaigns by Roger's admiral George of Antioch, against Muslim rulers in North Africa and Eastern Romans in Greece.)
(**1147–60,** steady loss of Sicily's briefly held possessions in North Africa.)
1154 Death of Roger II, succeeded as King of Sicily by his son William I 'the Evil'.
1155–56 Following Eastern Roman naval successes, last attempt to reconquer southern Italy by Emperor Manuel I Comnenos. After losing much territory the Normans are decisively victorious at Brindisi **(May 1156).**
1166 Death of William I, succeeded by William II 'the Good'.
1185 William II invades Byzantine Empire, recapturing Dhyrhachium and subjecting Thessaloniki to a violent sack. Advancing on Constantinople, he is decisively defeated by Emperor Isaac II Angolos at the battle of the Strymon.
1189 William II is forced to accept Byzantium's terms and abandon conquests; he dies in November.
1190 Throne of Sicily passes to Tancred of Lecce, illegitimate grandson of King Roger II, but succession is disputed by German Emperor Henry VI, husband of Roger's legitimate daughter Constance d'Hauteville.
1194 Tancred's death marks the end of the Norman Kingdom of Sicily; he is succeeded by Emperor Henry VI.

THE ROAD TO POWER

First recruitment

The first Norman encounter with Lombards in southern Italy is recorded by the Benedictine monk Amatus of Montecassino, whose *Ystoire de li Normant* is a later French transcription of his lost Latin chronicle. According to this, at some date early in the 11th century, 40 Norman pilgrims returning from Jerusalem were present when Salerno was attacked by Muslims (AM, I, 1, 17, 20–24). Eager 'to draw a sword against the followers of the Prophet', they requested arms and horses from the Lombard Prince Waimar III (Guaimarius), and courageously pursued and slew many of the attackers. They declined an offer to remain in the prince's service, but were accompanied home by Lombard emissaries carrying gifts to tempt other *milites* to travel south and take up arms under Waimar.



Three images of a sword from a 10th/11th-century grave at Cannae, possibly associated with the famous battle there in 1018. Several surviving specimens from the early Norman period show descent from the late-Roman *spatha,* via the Lombards or Eastern Romans. (Antiquarium, Canne della Battaglia; author's photos, courtesy of the Museum)

Those who accepted the offer formed two separate parties, led respectively by Gilbert Buatère (Giselbertus Buttericus) and Osmond Drengot (Osmundus Drengotus), the leaders of five brothers who left Normandy after a bloody feud over an accusation of rape. Arriving in Campania, they put themselves at the service of the Prince of Salerno (by now Waimar IV or V), and played a part in his temporary subjugation of Amalfi, Sorrento and Gaeta.

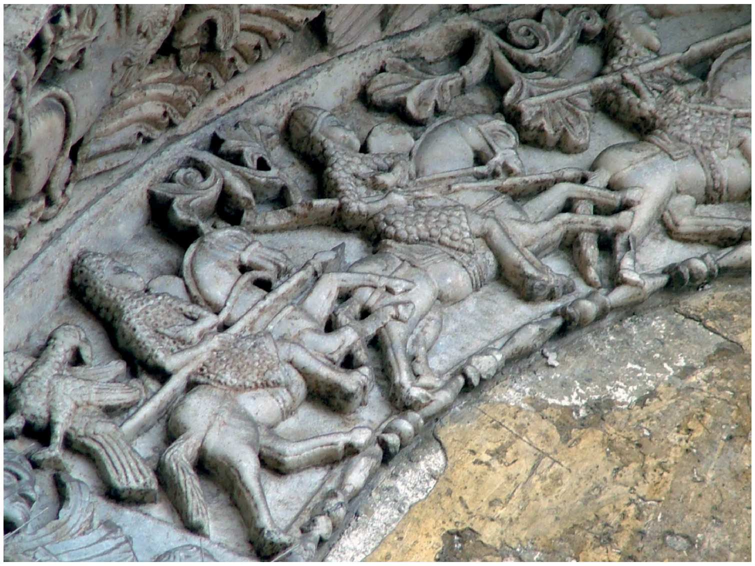
William of Apulia relates another version of the arrival of the Normans (GP, I, 36–38, 43). In his narrative, at some date in 1012–17, northern Frankish pilgrims from the sanctuary of St Michael of Garganus met Melos of Bari, a Lombard noble who had led an Apulian rebellion against Byzantium in 1013. Lured by his promises of wealth relayed by the returning pilgrims, some Normans travelled down to meet Melos in Campania (GP, I, 98). Hiring the band of Gilbert Buatère, Melos provided them with horses and weapons, made some of them his bodyguards (*comites*), and led them against the 'Greeks' in Apulia. Leo of Ostia places their meeting with Melos in Capua, where he was in exile from Bari (*Lib II*, p. 652, note a). While the narratives of Amatus and William clearly differ, their common elements are equally obvious.

First victories and possessions

While the Norman knights won significant victories for Melos in 1017, in October 1018 they were defeated at Cannae, where both Gilbert and Osmond were killed. Some then abandoned Melos and settled in Ariano; in a few years, the Norman county of Ariano became their first political entity, which was formally recognized in 1022 by the German Emperor Henry II.

This single-edged ‘scramasax-style’ short sword is one of several random finds from the battlefield of Cannae, 1018. Typical of the Lombards, such weapons were also common throughout southern Italy in the 11th century. (Private collection; author’s photo, 1990) (Inset) Scabbard chape of the same type of weapon, from Capua. (Museo Regionale Campano; author’s photo, courtesy of the Museum)

Independently, the Drengot band operated in Campania in the short-term service of more than one Lombard prince. After Osmond’s death, his brother Rainulf had assumed command, and in 1029–30 he married a sister of the Duke of Naples and received the county of Aversa, around a new town of that name founded by the Normans. This cradle of the Italo-Normans prospered, becoming a city and bishopric.

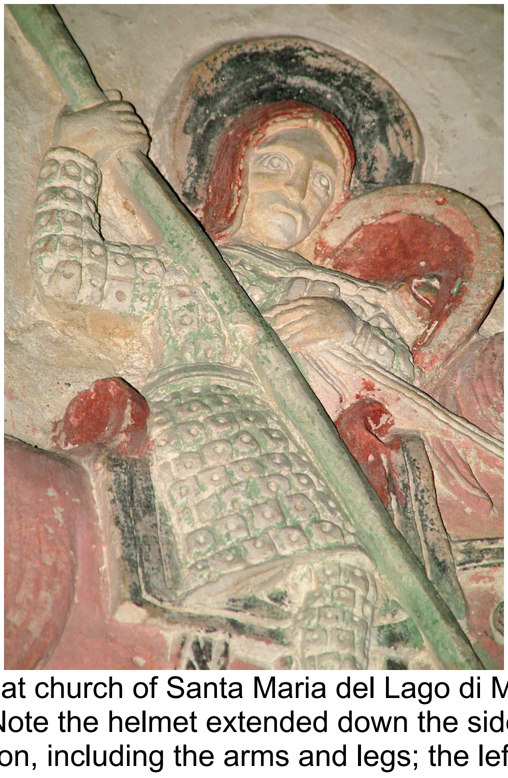


Norman *milites c*arved in a relief over north door of church of St Nicola, Bari, *c.*1100. The three visible riders wear short-sleeved, knee-length hauberks, and offer valuable proof of differing contemporary methods of handling the lance in battle: (left) underarm, (centre) couched, and (right) overarm, as also shown on the Bayeux Tapestry. (*In situ;* author’s photo)

Other Normans served the princes of Salerno against Byzantium’s forces, and in the process took over a good part of Apulia and Basilicata; in 1041 the Hautevilles made the city of Melfi their base (GM, I, 9). Amatus describes how on 4 May 1041, near Montemaggiore in Apulia, these knights formed a compact array of lancers and charged a less well-ordered Byzantine force with great success. After this victory, according to William of Apulia, 12 of the most distinguished Normans, elected as counts by their followers, agreed in 1042 a plan for the division of Apulia – ‘which place should belong to each leader and to whom tribute should be rendered'. After William d'Hauteville's death in 1046, Drogo continued to subjugate Apulia and Calabria, while Richard Drengot (r. 1049–78), Count of Aversa, consolidated and expanded his dominions in Campania.

Papal recognition

By now the Normans' growing power presented challenges not only to the Lombard lords, but also to the Church. When the Normans raided into Benevento on the border between imperial and papal territories, Pope Leo IX saw his policy of 'divide and rule' among the pattern of independent duchies threatened by this vigorous new power. He therefore formed a coalition with the German Emperor Henry III and Byzantium to confront the Normans; but the defeat of a joint Papal and German army in 1053 at Civitate in Apulia marked a turning point for Norman penetration in the South (see **here** 'Representative Battles'). Imprisoned by the Normans, Leo was released only when he recognized their conquests in return for promises of their military support.



Detail from painted *ambo* at church of Santa Maria del Lago di Moscufo, 1159, showing St George killing the dragon. Note the helmet extended down the sides and rear of the head; the scale armour of riveted iron, including the arms and legs; the left arm apparently crooked through a strap on the inside of the shield, with the hand gripping the reins; and the heavy saddle, with tall cantle and pommel arches and double girths. In the uncropped image, the lance has a small squared pennon with three streamers, attached by two loops just below a spherical shape at the bottom of the lancehead. (*In situ*; author's photo)

An even more complete endorsement by the Papacy was cemented in June–July 1059, when Richard of Aversa and Robert 'Guiscard' d'Hauteville swore allegiance to the new Pope Nicholas II (r. 1059–61). Richard obtained the premature title of Prince of Capua (which he was at that time besieging), while Robert 'the Cunning' was invested with the Duchy of Apulia and Calabria – and sovereignty over Sicily, in anticipation that he would recapture it for Christendom from the Saracens.

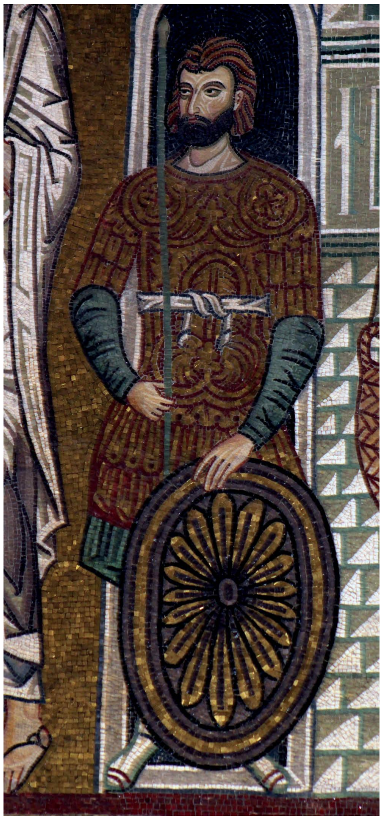
Robert Guiscard quickly took Reggio from the Eastern Romans, and completed his conquest of Calabria in 1060 with the aid of his youngest brother, Count Roger I. In 1061, Roger led the first attempt on Sicily; Capua finally surrendered to Richard Drengot in May 1062, and shortly thereafter Gaeta also fell into his hands. However, the conquest of Sicily would in fact take another 30 years, as a result of both stubborn Muslim resistance and a shortage of manpower during simultaneous campaigns on other fronts. In Italy, it was 1076 before the Drengots finally took Salerno; and, despite their titular power, the Drengots and Hautevilles found it hard to enforce their authority over their vassals scattered through the hills and valleys of southern Italy.

Failure in the Balkans

The Normans took Bari, the last stronghold of the East Roman Empire in Italy, in April 1071. This coincided with a moment of profound crisis for Constantinople, since just four months later the Turks inflicted the catastrophic defeat of Manzikert. It may thus seem surprising that the Hautevilles' attempt to carry their war into Byzantine territory in the Balkans failed, but even in the aftermath of Manzikert the 'Greeks' still enjoyed a clear strategic superiority. They were able to cut Guiscard's sea supply lines (GM, I, 33), to bribe some Norman knights, and, above all, to secure a diplomatic alliance with the German Emperor Henry VI, whose bitter quarrel with the Papacy confronted the Normans with war on two fronts. While Guiscard was tied down besieging cities and fortresses in the Balkans, in 1084 he was suddenly obliged to hasten back to Rome with the bulk of his troops to save the Pope (AV, p. 772).

Multicultural influences

It should be remembered, however, that relations between the Italo-Norman and Byzantine worlds were not exclusively belligerent. The Normans, being few in number, had to deal with East Roman administrative structures, among largely Greek-speaking populations influenced by Byzantine culture and following Orthodox Christianity. Guiscard's brother, Roger I, Count of Calabria, surrounded himself with Greek-speaking advisers and officials, and intermarriage both by Lombards and Normans was commonplace. Before Roger II's establishment of the Kingdom of Sicily, Greek was the main language in Calabria and Sicily, and he signed all his documents in Greek. It was only after 1130 that Greek officials in Sicily were gradually supplanted by Italians. Finally, under William II, we note a certain presence in the royal entourage of Arab servants and advisers. Sicily had a richly polyglot culture, and, throughout the period of roughly 1070 to 1200, although 'political' conflicts did frequently occur, ethnic and religious tolerance generally prevailed.

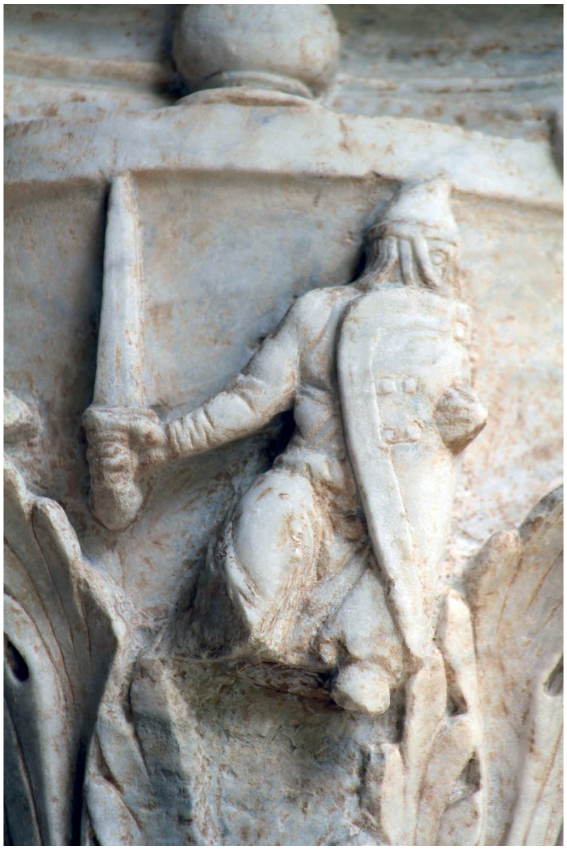


Guardsman depicted in a mosaic in the Palatine Chapel, Palermo, *c.*1140. His muscled armour worn above hanging *pteryges* is almost certainly of boiled and moulded leather. Such worked leather armours were a distinctly Italian style, seen from the 12th century in central Italy as well as in the regions formerly ruled by Byzantium. Note too the narrow, knotted sash of rank, worn since Classical and Hellenistic times. (*In situ*; author's photo)

Strict European feudalism was introduced, but while military functions on land were almost exclusively in the hands of Normans, naval commanders might be Greeks. Examples were the great admiral George of Antioch in the 1140–50s, and the 'pirate' Margarito of Brindisi in the 1180s. The representation of royal Norman warships on the capitals of Cefalù Cathedral show the typical war galley of the eastern Mediterranean, derived from the Late Roman *dhromon*. Sailors and maritime troops were recruited from northern Italian states such as Pisa and Genoa.

Reputation

The chronicles depict the Normans as able fighters, trained since childhood in the use of weapons. Leo of Ostia (p. 651) describes the first Normans who met Melos in Capua as tall, handsome, and '*armis experientissimi'*. Describing the conduct of Robert Guiscard in the battle of Civitate, William of Apulia claims that he stood out above every other man on either side for the power of his blows. William also credits Guiscard with being 'shrewder than Ulysses, more valiant than Caesar'. He identifies him as the perfect model of the Norman knights, who owed their superiority to three essential characteristics: 'military audacity' in combat; 'the art of cunning' to deceive the adversary; and the 'spirit of domination' – that is, limitless ambition for power.



A warrior, apparently of Greek or Saracen infantry, carved on a capital in the cloister of Monreale Cathedral, 1174–89. The ‘Phrygian’ helmet with nasal bar has here developed into a type with a visor or face mask for added protection. Note also the shapes of the sword and shield, and the latter’s pronounced boss. (*In situ*; author’s photo)

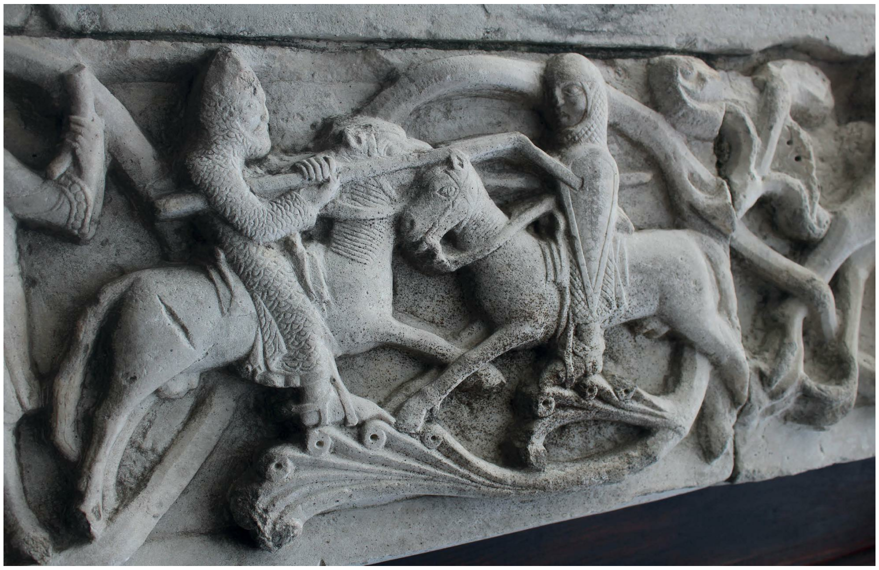
According to Malaterra (GM, I, 3, I, 4), the young Normans were ‘much addicted to hunting and falconry, and they delight in fancy clothes, elaborate horse trappings and decorations on their weapons’. However, perhaps due to his Lombard origins and Byzantine culture, William of Apulia sometimes depicts the Normans as barbarous, cruel, and boorish (GP, II, 426–8, 154). He calls them ‘wolves’, who openly recruited local criminals into their ranks, and contrasts them with the *nobilitas* of their Lombard and East Roman opponents. The anonymous Continuator of *Skylitzes* describes Guiscard as a thief and brigand who looted and destroyed throughout southern Italy, imposing taxes and other hateful burdens on the people, and inflicting such cruelties as the cutting off of prisoners’ hands and feet.

The chroniclers often stress the two main elements of the Norman character as the strength (*strenuitas*) and ferocity (*feritas*) inherited from their Viking ancestors. The deeds of the Italo-Normans soon inspired poetic tales narrated by storytellers in all the Norman lands, especially in England and

Normandy, and in these one may detect distant echoes of their ancient Nordic culture.

In his account of Count Roger's conquest of Sicily, Malaterra describes the Normans as 'endowed with a particular ingenuity... They leave their country in the hope of finding more advantageous opportunities. Hungry for wealth and power, they are able to simulate or dissimulate anything, and are at the same time both generous and greedy... If they were not firmly restrained by the yoke of justice, they would be inclined to any kind of transgression.'

While light hair and blue eyes among Sicilians are popularly attributed to the medieval Normans or the Lombards who often accompanied them, we do not in fact know how many Normans actually settled in Sicily. The first incursions were measured in hundreds of Norman knights accompanied by larger numbers of non-Norman infantry; not all of them remained there, and most of those who did, married Sicilian-born women. Norman culture was not built upon ethnic exclusivity, and the term *gens Normannorum* indicates simply 'all the people living in the territory possessed by the Normans'. According to William of Apulia, during the early years of their conquest of southern Italy the Normans welcomed into their ranks all the 'Greeks' and Lombards who sought refuge with them, and 'instructed them in their customs and taught them their language, so that all together formed a single people (*gens*)'.



Architrave of south door of church of St Marcello Maggiore, Capua, post-1150. The Normans favoured tournaments and cavalry games as training for war. These *milites* are charging with couched lances and long kite shields; their steeds visibly have curb bits, as introduced in about 1140. (*In situ*; author's photo)

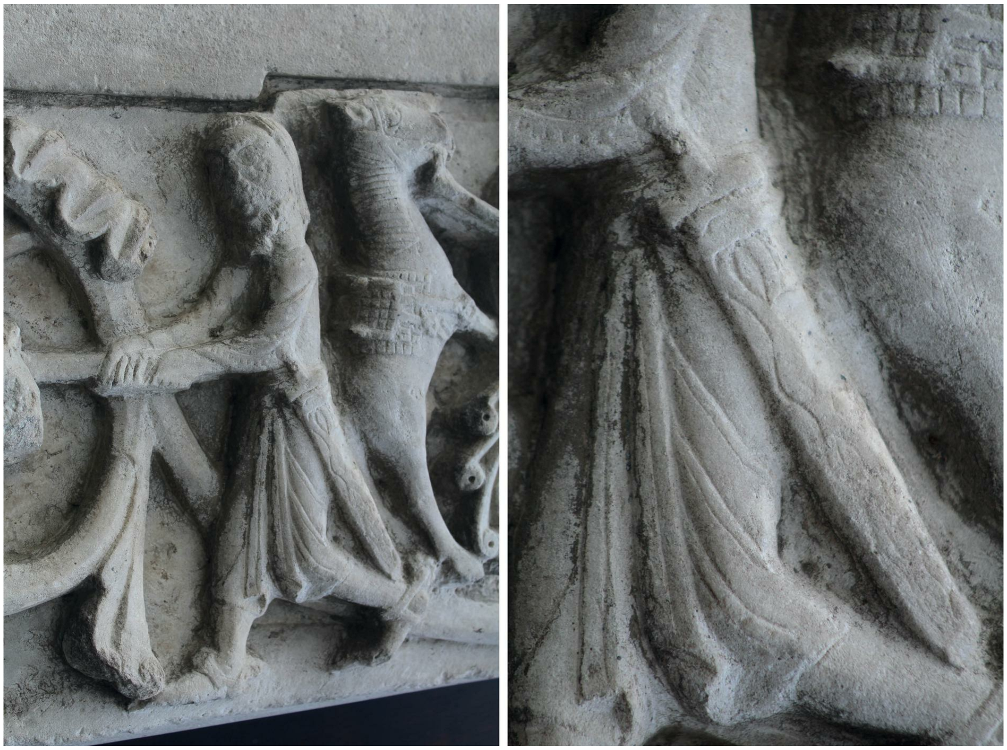
ORGANIZATION

THE NORMANS OF THE CONQUEST

Cavalry (*exercitus equestri*)

In Western medieval armies, there were no rigid subdivisions into hierarchies of unit sizes as in the Eastern Roman army. William of Apulia gives the title of the leader of a Norman war-band as *comes*. A lord's *milites* were organized in tactical units of 20–30 men. Sometimes described using the archaic terms *cuneus* or *acies*, these were more probably called *conrois* in the technical language of the day, and numbers of these were assembled into field armies. Training was conducted on the basis of these small units, under the direction of 'officers' called *magistri belli*. Amatus observed that a Norman company was composed of 25–80 men, led by an elected captain who administered the finances and hired the men (AM, I, 29–30). In fact that higher number seems unrealistic, and other accounts point towards the more plausible figure of about 25.

In 1041, Rainulf sent against the *Rhomaioi* in Apulia 300 men under the command of 12 *comites* chosen on the basis of lineage, age and military ability, who were committed to share equally the possible land conquests (AM, II, 18, 23). Count Roger I led the same number of *milites* in his expedition towards Reggio (GM, I, 21). For the First Crusade (1096–99), the Italo-Norman army sent 500 knights under 26 leaders, giving about 20 men per company. Robert Guiscard arrived in Italy with only 5 horsemen and 30 infantrymen (*Alexiad*, I, 10), whom he initially led as a freebooter before throwing in his lot with Humphrey. In his first expedition to Calabria, Roger I had only 60 *milites armati* (GM, I, 19–20) when he entered the service of his brother Guiscard, but was able to increase them to 100 thanks to the proceeds of raiding (GM, I, 25–26). The same number appears during his first Sicilian raid (GM, II, 1), although he began the second expedition *cum maximo equitatu* ('with a great force of cavalry') – 160 *milites* – while Guiscard had about twice that number at the conquest of Messina. Again, Count Roger led 300 young knights (*juvenes*) in raids on northern Sicily (GM, II, 17; 28), but it is striking that such a force is called by Malaterra 'a little warrior band' (*parva manus*).



The architrave of St Marcello Maggiore also shows this dismounted *miles* – a cavalryman identified by his spurs – catching a runaway horse. The carving of his Romanesque costume gives an impression of rich quality, and note the decorated sword scabbard. The weapon, with medium-size quillons, shows analogies with Oakeshott Type III. (*In situ*; author's photo)

Each of these tactical units under a single leader were gathered around a particular banner, which was the means of recognition and assembly on the battlefield. For example, in an episode at Sora, the Normans deployed 25 men with a standard-bearer, who was the only one to be killed (GM. I, 33).

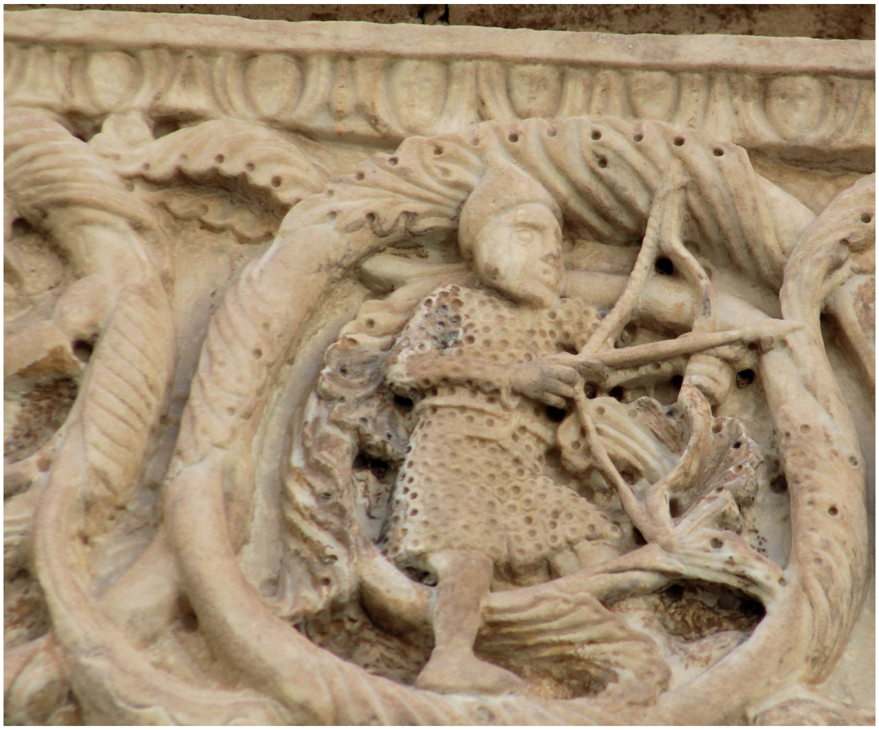
In the 11th century, Norman and French lordships were constantly being created in the territories taken from Byzantium. Most of the men who held them were already members of the Norman feudal hierarchy, but not all. Many simple *milites stipendiarii* (paid knights – GM, II, 20) began to ascend the ranks only after acquiring lands in southern Italy by their military exploits (GM, I, 5; 11).

Norman veterans soon formed the *familiaris militia* of a *comes* or *dux*, serving as bodyguards and deputy commanders; their lord would consider these *fidelissimi milites* ('most loyal knights') like *fratres* ('brothers') or *consanguinei* (‘kinsmen’). Each knight had a squire (*armigerus*), and leaders more than one (GM, I, 25; II, 28). The *armiger* followed his *miles* on horseback, carrying his armour (GM, II, 4).

Infantry

During the 1041 campaign that culminated in the victories of Olivento, Montemaggiore and Montepeloso, the infantry played a decisive role, and there is no doubt that, at least in the early years, even the *milites* did not disdain to fight on foot if the circumstances demanded it.

The infantry employed by the Normans were mainly recruited in Italy, and a leader’s success depended on his ability to attract them in numbers sufficient to support his heavy cavalry effectively. For example, Robert Guiscard formed the backbone of his first expedition in Calabria with 60 Slavs, probably Bulgarian deserters from the Eastern Roman army (GM, I, 16), who proved extremely loyal. For the later civil war he recruited in Cosenza, which was a noted source of good infantrymen (‘*ad bella pedestria pomtos’* – GP, III, 576–7; also IV, 472–3). From these groups, he promoted the best fighters into his cavalry (‘*de peditibus sui equites fecit’)*. After defeating Greek troops at San Martino in 1058, Roger d’Hauteville also distributed captured horses and weapons to his own soldiers. Chalandon has underlined the desertion of *kontaratoi* lancers from Byzantium to the Normans, and it seems that the local population was essentially divided into two groups, one supporting the newcomers and the other remaining faithful to Byzantium (*AV*, p.755, re: the battle of Montepeloso).



Carved lintel of north door of church of Martorana, Palermo, showing an infantry archer wearing ringmail. His weapon appears to be a recurved composite bow with long angled ‘ears’. (*In situ*; author’s photo)

Usually a military expedition comprised both cavalry and infantry (GM, I, 21), the infantry being divided between *pedites* (heavy or light infantry) and *balistarii* (crossbowmen). The sizes of armies naturally varied, and the sources usually mention only the number of knights. For instance, according to Malaterra, Roger invaded Sicily at first with 160 *milites* (GM, II, 4), and then with 250 (II, 18); but he omits the size of the whole army, which must also have included infantry, mercenaries and servants, plus the Muslim allies led by the Amir Ibn Al Thumna. The usual number of *milites* garrisoning a castle in wartime was 60 (GM, I, 28), while the other men of a garrison were termed *custodes* (GM, II, 13).

THE SICULO-NORMAN KINGDOM

Ethnic components of the army

The central position of southern Italy and Sicily in the Mediterranean world, both geographically and politically, allowed the Normans to act on a number of different fronts. Consequently, the army of the 12th-century Norman kingdom was a synthesis of different ethnic groups – Normans, Lombards, Latins, Muslims and ‘Greeks’ – which differed from those of other Western sovereigns in forming the core of what was almost a professional force. Mercenaries, from both northern Italy and North Africa, were also employed. Usually the royal field army mustered both heavy and light cavalry; some of the latter, according to Nicolle, were armed with the bow but did not fight in the Turkish/ Central Asian fashion. From campaign to campaign, the army also attracted short-term volunteers (*rizico*) fighting simply for loot.

The Normans inherited a flourishing, if modest, local armaments industry. It is impossible to say exactly how its products resembled or differed from those in neighbouring areas, but the iconography suggests a mixture of Western European, Byzantine, North African and Middle Eastern patterns.

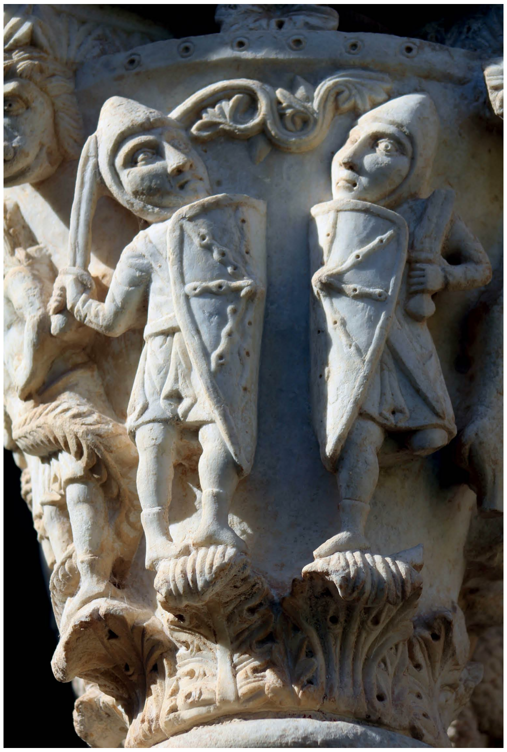
Normans, Lombards and Latins

After the conquest, a considerable but gradual feudalization of the countryside took place. Feudal military obligations resembled those in northern France: 40 days of knightly service with hauberk and *destrier,* and a suitable feudal following. However, the *milites* of Aversa copied the structure of Naples and other southern Italian states (GM, I, IX). In these, the *milites* enjoyed the status of equals rather than a ‘pyramid’ of vassals, and in theory the entire population had military roles, though in practice only a minority participated in the levy.

Eventually King Roger II, through his *De Nova Militia*, reshuffled the territorial lordships and replaced the old Norman kin groups of Guiscard’s time with men who were in his confidence, bound directly to the royal family. Although he operated a basically feudal system, his heavy cavalry might be either feudal ‘knights by investiture’ (*milites per nomine militiae*), or ‘knights by profession’ (*per professione militia*) in direct royal employment – often veterans of former Lombard or Eastern Roman armies. In 1154 and 1166, the *Catalogus Baronum* counted no less than 3,453 ‘one-hauberk’ knights on the mainland, even excluding Calabria. We also find mention of non-noble freeholders, probably new arrivals, with land tenure in return for military service.

Instructed in the use of arms since childhood, the feudal knights were invested by their overlords in the name of the king, presenting themselves for the ceremony at around the age of 16. The rite, which certainly by the late 12th century involved the blessing of spurs, helmet and sword, inducted the young man into the *Ordo Militis,* a class devoted to the defence of the Church and of the weak, by which the *miles* sought the salvation of his soul through his actions. Malaterra already described Count Roger I as a strenuous defender of widows and orphans, and a builder of cathedrals, in the second half of the 11th century.

The mixed Latin and Lombard population were employed mainly as infantry, although the bravest could also attain the rank of knight. The coastal cities such as Naples, Amalfi, Gaeta and Bari possessed a class of citizens whose status and military obligations, especially as cavalry, were sufficiently impressive for the Normans to enfief them as knights within a few years of the conquest. Mounted troops armoured to Western European standard were also contributed by the land-holding Church authorities.



Figures on a capital in the cloister of Monreale Cathedral, 1174–89, representing Italo-Norman infantry swordsmen. They are unarmoured except for conical helmets; the large kite shields, with rounded or straight top edges, bear-embossed blazons in the form of an eight-armed ‘star’ centred on the boss. This corresponds to the shields of some papal militiamen in Rome. (*In situ*; author’s photo)

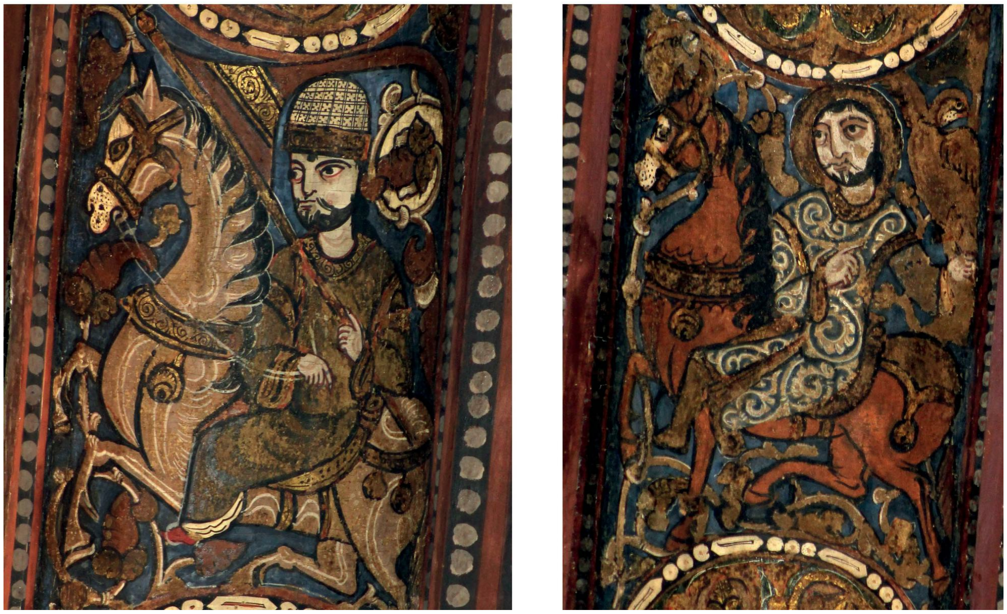
Beside the Normans who played the dominant role in the conquest, other northern warriors included Bretons, Flemings, Poitevins and Angevins, whose equipment and tactics were virtually identical to those of the Normans.

During the 12th century, the use of paid mercenaries increased in the army of the increasingly wealthy Kingdom of Sicily, with a corresponding decline of former part-time local militias. Nevertheless, urban and rural militias did survive as an important element in the Norman army; although many were apparently of serf origin, secular militias included a few armoured horsemen as well as light cavalry and numerous infantry. The *villein* class in Sicily, whether of Lombard, Greek or Muslim origin, performed specific garrison duties. The serfs, called *servientes defensati*, were expected to provide their own equipment when their services were required.

Muslims

The first participation of constituted Muslim units alongside the Normans is attested as early as 1060, following an alliance between Count Roger I and the Amir of Catania in Sicily, Ibn Al Thumna. During the Norman invasion of the island there were no Saracen troops under the count's direct orders, but after the amir's death the Normans negotiated military co-operation agreements with other local leaders.

During the siege of Salerno in 1076, Saracen contingents were already taking part in the operations alongside Christians, but they would not become a major component of the Norman army until Sicily was finally conquered in 1091. In that year, Roger Borsa asked for the help of his uncle, Count Roger, to besiege Cosenza, and Roger led thousands of Saracens to his nephew's aid. The same happened in 1094, when Borsa appealed for his uncle's intervention to suppress the rebellion of Castrovillari. The presence of many Saracens (including engineers) in Count Roger's army is also attested in 1098, when he intervened to quell a Lombard revolt against Prince Richard II of Capua.



The painted ceilings of the Palatine Chapel, Palermo, 1143, are fundamental evidence of the appearance of both Christian and Muslim contingents of Roger II's Kingdom of Sicily. These two figures from the aisle show (left) an unarmoured Arab cavalryman wearing a padded felt cap, and (right) a hunter in highly decorative court dress. Obscured at top left is the sharply angled diamond-shaped head of a lance, flying a long (triangular?) pennon with a lengthways central division between decorative patterning and a solid colour. (*In situ*; author's photos)

Vital roles were filled by indigenous Muslims from western Sicily serving under their own officers, mainly as military engineers, cavalrymen (some with bows), infantrymen (most famously, highly mobile archers), and in various bodyguards. Such Siculo-Muslim professional soldiers, paid by the royal treasury and enjoying religious toleration of their Islamic observances, became in some respects the most loyal and effective troops in the Siculo-Norman army. Other Muslim mercenaries were Berbers, Arabs or Africans from North Africa, and all of these 'Saracens' continued to participate in the Normans' wars against their Christian foes in Italy or in the Balkans until the end of the kingdom. On Sicily itself there is evidence of some sort of accommodation between Norman knightly fiefs and the previous Muslim *iqtā*, a form of military land-holding.

Greeks (*Rhomaioi*)

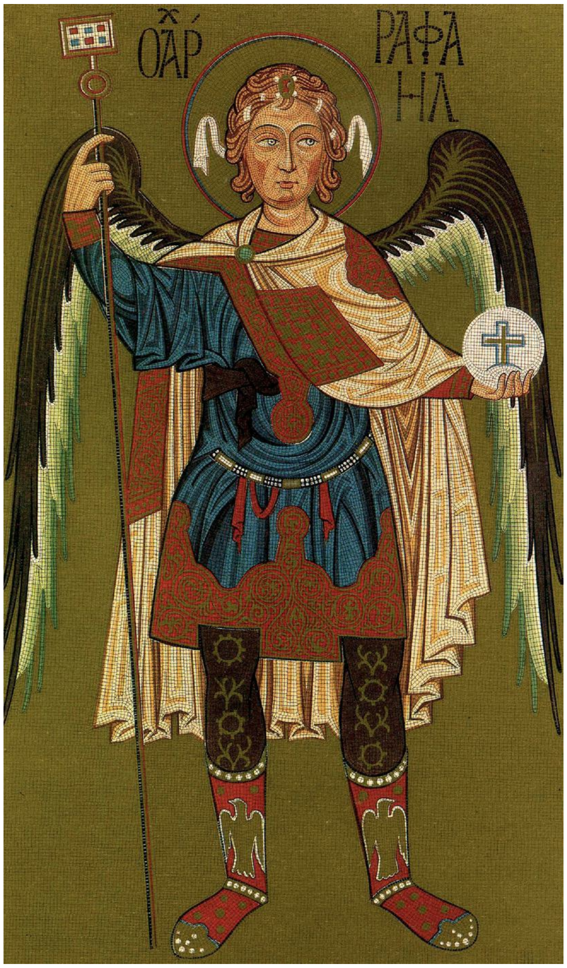
The third component was drawn from *Rhomaioi* minorities, either from eastern Sicily (Troina), or from the territories (Calabria, Apulia, Lucania) formerly belonging to the Byzantine *Thema* of Langobardia. During the conquest of Sicily, we hear of armed Greek communities, formally under

Arab leadership (GM, II, 29). Ethnically a mixture of Greeks from north-east Sicily and from Calabria – especially the Salento ‘heel’ – and Italo-Lombards from Lucania and Apulia, they formed local urban militias, largely of infantry. Being more engaged with local interests than with any nominal loyalty to Constantinople, they often came to terms with the Normans, becoming part of the new military organization of the kingdom. On the mainland, the people of the Adriatic cities such as Bari were easily transformed by the Normans into feudal cavalry.

Tactics and deployment

The medieval clashes between Byzantium – heir of centuries of classical military tradition – and the Normans were emblematic of two different conceptions of warfare. The latter imposed themselves on the former on many battlefields, later leading to changes in the structure of the Eastern Roman army following major recruitment of Norman mercenaries.

The sources for the early period of the conquest describe a war largely of raiding, and looting for supplies (GM, II,29), which gained results for a modest investment in terms of manpower, time and risk. An example is given by Malaterra after the battle of Montepeloso (GM, I, 10): ‘the Normans launched frequent and damaging raids against [the Romans]. Destroying their vineyards and olive groves, and seizing their herds, flocks and the other supplies which they needed, they left them nothing outside their *castra*.’ As Norman numbers increased, warfare developed into more ambitious campaigns of attrition, requiring the organization and management of prolonged sieges, with technology drawn from other Mediterranean military cultures.



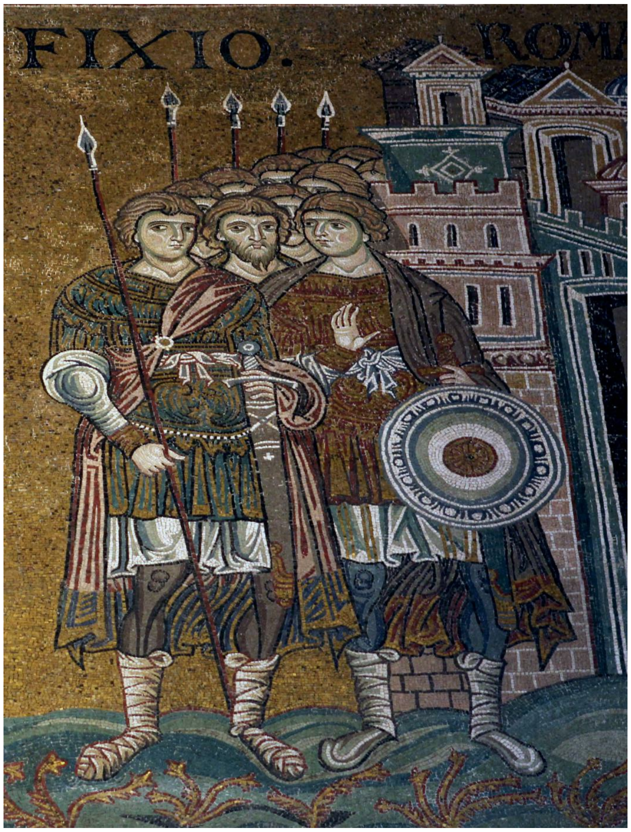
A mosaic in the dome of the Palatine Chapel shows the Archangel Raphael depicted as an *archon* in Byzantine court uniform; compare with **Plate E1**. The headdress is a small diadem decorated with gemstones, and in the right hand is a small standard resembling an ancient *labara,* similarly decorated. Note the elaborate red boots sewn with pearls. (Ex-Amari, Cavallari, Boglino & Carini)

Although major pitched battles were relatively infrequent, the Normans demonstrated tactical sophistication beyond the direct hammer-blow of the heavy cavalry charge: the combined use of cavalry and infantry, deployment in different formations, use of reserves, and simulated retreat to draw opponents into vulnerable positions (GM, II, 1). Whatever the nature of the battlefield or the size of the opposing forces, the Normans usually took the initiative. Their lack of Byzantium’s permanent unit organizations, rigid hierarchies and logistic ‘tail’ was apparently as often an advantage as a handicap. Their tactical organization was leaner and nimbler, while a field army of Norman *equites* still demonstrated sufficient order and compactness – a legacy of the Norse/Germanic emphasis on personal loyalty to the leader of a war-band. As well as this tactical cohesion, they were highly motivated by the spirit of conquest: for each of them, victory might bring not only loot, but also land.

The writings of the Byzantine princess Anna Comnena describe the dismay of the Eastern Romans at the apparent invincibility of these new adversaries. Rightly or wrongly, this superiority was attributed to the ability of their cavalry, heavily equipped with mail coats, long shields and heavy lances, to disrupt opposing ranks with the decisive impetus of their irresistible charges. However, in a speech to his men before the battle of Dyrrhachium (1081/82), Robert Guiscard advised his ‘elite cavalrymen’ not to be overly confident; he took seriously the prospect of engaging the Emperor Alexios’ ‘hostile wedges’ of heavy lancers – that is, the κατάφρακτοι arranged in their characteristic blunt-nosed wedge formation (GP, IV 355–356, 361–362).

At the battle of the Olivento (1041), the Normans opposed a *cuneus* (wedge formation) launched against them by the Rhomaioi. The Normans adopted a more flexible battle array, formed by two wings and the centre deployed in a single battle line, but with different and precise tactical functions: the central core of the cavalry was to perform a frontal charge, while on the wings, knights fighting on foot were mixed with the infantry.

It is difficult to establish the exact moment from which the technique of the ‘couched’ lance, repeatedly mentioned by Malaterra, began to be used systematically by cavalry *conrois* organized in formation, considering that this form of combat – at least for single horsemen – was already practised in southern Italy. Perhaps the battle of Civitate (1053) was particularly significant, since it was on that field that the frontal charge of Norman lancers proved to be decisive in overwhelming the German Emperor’s troops. It is clear that the *lance couchée* technique was further improved by the Italo-Normans in combats against their different enemies.



Detail from a mosaic of the crucifixion of St Peter in the Cathedral Basilica of Monreale, *c*.1170. It depicts soldiers uniformed and equipped in Eastern Roman (Byzantine) style. (*In situ*; author's photo)

During campaigns against the Lombards, and again during the conquest of Sicily, the superior Norman charge clearly dominated open-field battles, since sources describe it as winning victories against great (and sometimes incredible) odds – the accuracy of the figures is less important than the idea of disproportionate success. For instance, according to Malaterra (GM, V, 33), in the battle of Cerami 136 Norman *milites* defeated 3,000 Muslims; and at Castrogiovanni, Amatus (AM, V, 23) claims that 15,000 Muslim cavalry and 100,000 infantrymen were beaten by 1,000 Norman knights and 1,000 infantrymen. On the other hand, in Sicily, the Normans had great difficulty in holding the ground that they conquered against their resilient and highly mobile opponents.

The Normans were masters of simulating retreat in battle before decisively committing reserves. Malaterra also uses the term *doctissimi artifices* about the activity of infantry and archers, employed in combination with the cavalry both for frontal charges and also to apply insistent pressure upon the flanks. Naturally, infantry were also often assigned to guard camps; we read that after the inconclusive battle at Larissa, the Emperor Alexios decimated the defending Norman *pedites* and captured the Italo-Norman camp, complete with all the spoils gathered up to that point (GP, V, 43–9, 238; cf *Alexias*, V, 6, 158).

Siege warfare

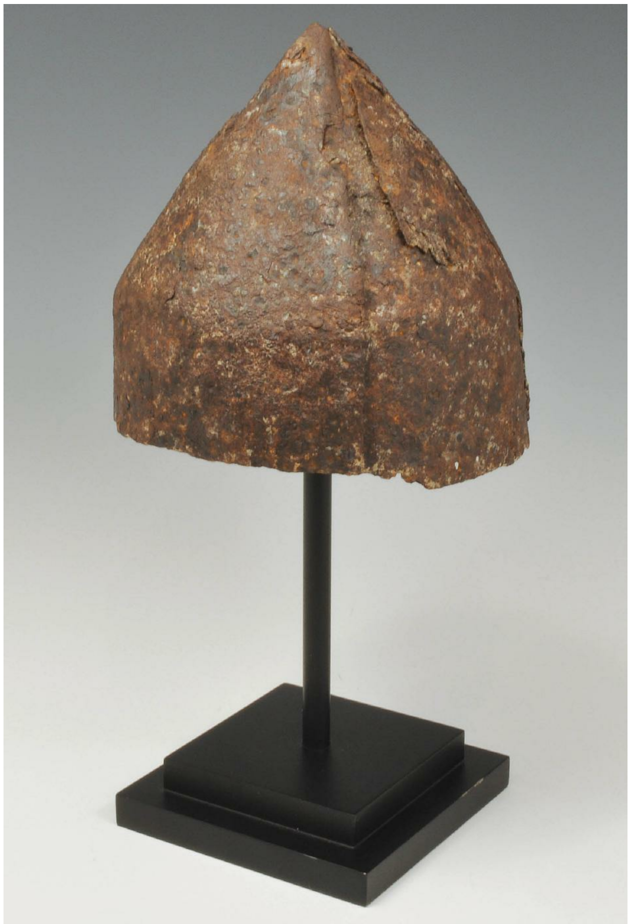
Rather than directly assaulting a city under siege, the Normans typically constructed lines of circumvallation and intercepted any attempted resupply, thus both starving the defenders into submission and supplying the siege army. However, they were also skilled in the construction of siege engines. Malaterra (GM, I, 10) writes that ‘Their army surrounded the *castra* in which the Greeks had taken refuge and attacked them with *machinamenta*. A hail of blows damaged the walls and towers and undermined the foundations. With the walls broken down, they were able to enter and storm them…’ (see also GM, I, 13 & I, 34 on the sieges of Civitate and Reggio).

ARMOUR & WEAPONS

Normans, Lombards and Latins

It is difficult to be certain of the equipment used by Norman forces on their first appearance in the Mediterranean world, since the narrative sources offer scant evidence. William of Apulia (GP, I, 257–259) writes that at the Olivento in 1041 very few of the 700 Norman warriors were fully equipped: ‘Only a few were protected by hauberks and shields’. It is probable that leaders arrived with full equipment, but that men of lower rank and means were soon wearing mixtures of Frankish and Lombard elements – such as helmets with cheek-guards and, for the luckiest, metal or leather scale armour. Both round shields and lance-pennons with streamers were already known to the northern Franks. During the conquest period, local equipment and weapons were not only taken from the battlefield individually, but also issued after capture: Malaterra writes (GM, I, 32) that Robert Guiscard ‘enriched all his men from the captured booty, horses and weapons’ (see also II, 4 & 26).

The best iconographic evidence is found in 11th- and particularly 12th-century Romanesque churches in southern Italy, as well as in mosaics and paintings still preserved in Palermo and a few other localities. Amongst these, the ceiling paintings of the Palatine Chapel (1140–43 – the royal chapel of the Norman kings in Palermo), and the carved capitals in the cloister of Monreale Cathedral (1174–89), are of greatest importance. These images do not always correspond closely with those on the earlier Bayeux Tapestry; although a general type of equipment – characterized by a helmet, shield, spear, sword, and mail armour made of interlaced rings or rings sewn to leather backing – was universally adopted throughout Western Europe during the 12th century, Norman knights in southern Italy showed local influences.



Three-quarter front view of a ‘Phrygian-shaped’ helmet, 11th century, probably from southern Italy or eastern Mediterranean. This extremely rare example, 19cm (7.5in) high, is made from four triangular iron plates shaped to accommodate the curvature of the head and coming to a point at the apex. It is contoured so that the front and back plates overlap the sideplates by 1–2cm (0.4–0.8in), secured by flattened iron rivets through the overlaps. The lower rim had an additional series of rivets, probably to secure a lining; two empty rivet holes at the base of the side plates show where an under-chin fastening or perhaps cheek-guards were originally attached. The junction at the apex is left slightly open, perhaps to allow insertion of a plume, although a missing conical covering plate might have been attached. (Private collection; photo courtesy of Timeline Auctions)

When not all the elements of this panoply were present, the *miles* was considered to have been almost naked: the deeds of Count Roger d’Hauteville at Messina were considered particularly heroic because he threw himself at the enemy equipped only with a sword and shield (GM, II, 4). The Arab poet, Ibn Hamdis, underlines the contrast between his countrymen and the Norman knights covered by ‘shining coats of mail’.

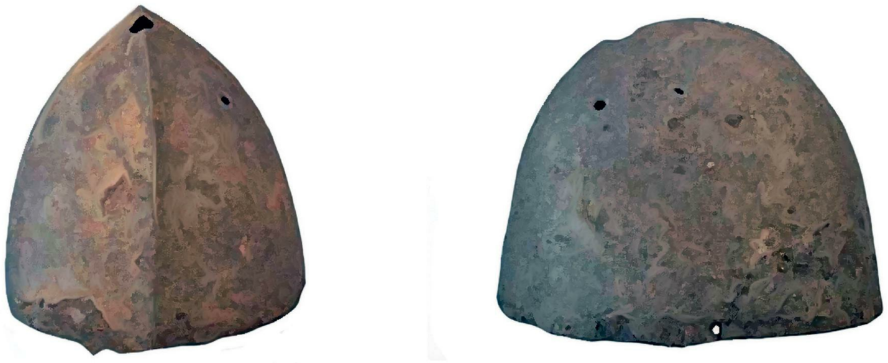
Anna Comnena’s description corresponds with what is visible on 12th-century southern Italian monuments *(Alexiad*, XIII, 8): ‘[The Normans] were

... practically invulnerable, thanks to their breastplates and coats of mail... Therefore he considered shooting at them useless... For the [Norman] weapon of defence is this coat of mail, ring plaited into ring ... of such excellent iron that it repels arrows… An additional weapon of defence is a shield which is not round, but a long shield, very broad at the top and running out to a point, hollowed slightly inside, but externally smooth and gleaming with a brilliant boss of cast brass. Consequently any arrow, be it Scythian or Persian ... would glance off…'

Protective equipment

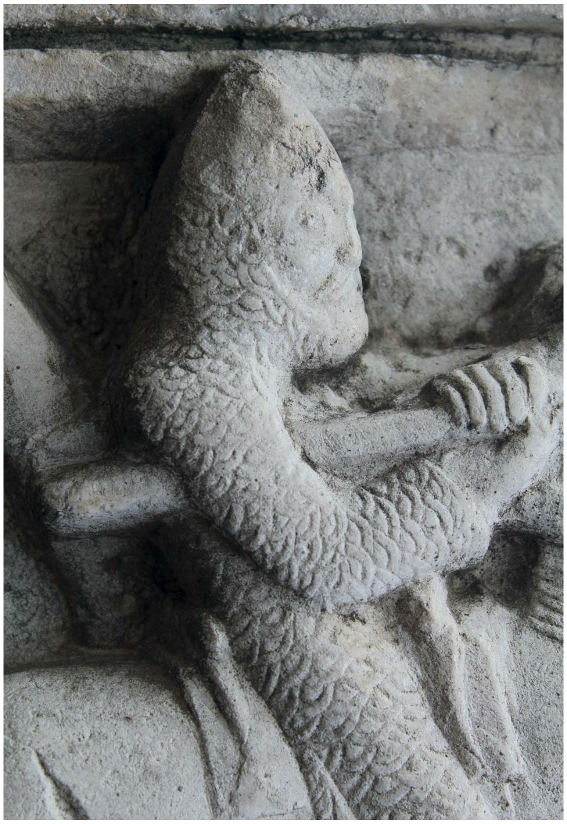
The *ambo* of the church of Sta Maria del Lago di Moscufo (1159) in the province of Pescara, and the Portal of the Eight Knights at St Nicola in Bari, show a conical vertically ribbed **helmet** without a nasal bar, and extended at the back to protect the nape, similar to models documented in other areas. However, during the 12th century, helmets were usually of tall conical shape, with nasals and lacking the rear extension, as visible on the Palatine Chapel ceiling.

Another distinctively Western form appeared to have a 'Phrygian' forward-angled apex, a feature which almost certainly indicated that the front and top of the helmet were thicker than the sides and rear. A Phrygian variant is worn by warriors on the Monreale capitals fitted with a face-guard – a visor or mask – suggesting Mozarabic origins. Segmented *Spangenhelme* are also visible in the St Nicola carvings, betraying a stronger Mediterranean influence.

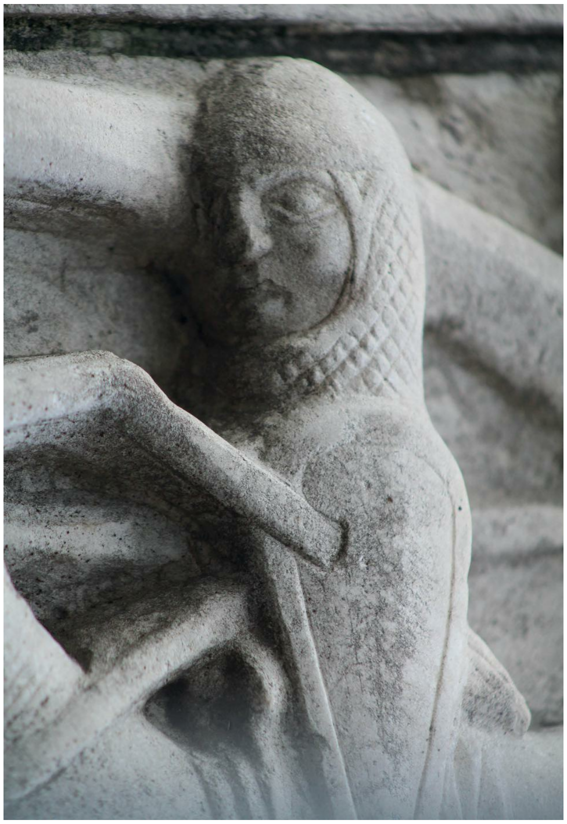


Front and side of a Western European helmet, possibly from southern Italy, late 11th century. This Norman rounded conical helmet with a pronounced medial ridge was very skilfully hand forged, entirely from one piece of thick high-carbon steel finished with a perfectly smooth surface. Most helmets of the period were hammered from iron, only the finest examples being made of steel. The damage shows sharp cracks, steel being more brittle than malleable iron; the material is also quickly identifiable by giving a different 'ring' when struck. The bottom edge shows rivets to attach hanging parts. Ivory panels from Salerno probably show this typology of helmet. (European private collection; drawings courtesy Dr A. Negin)

The most famous Norman **body armour** was the mail hauberk composed of thousands of interlaced rings, forming a flexible garment sufficiently resistant to slashing cuts but less effective against pointed thrusts. The image above the north door of St Nicola at Bari shows short sleeves. Long-sleeved hauberks, fitted with mail hoods, are visible on the *pulvinus* of Montevergine Abbey, in the cloister of Santa Sophia in Benevento (1167), and in late 12th-century miniatures by Pietro da Eboli.



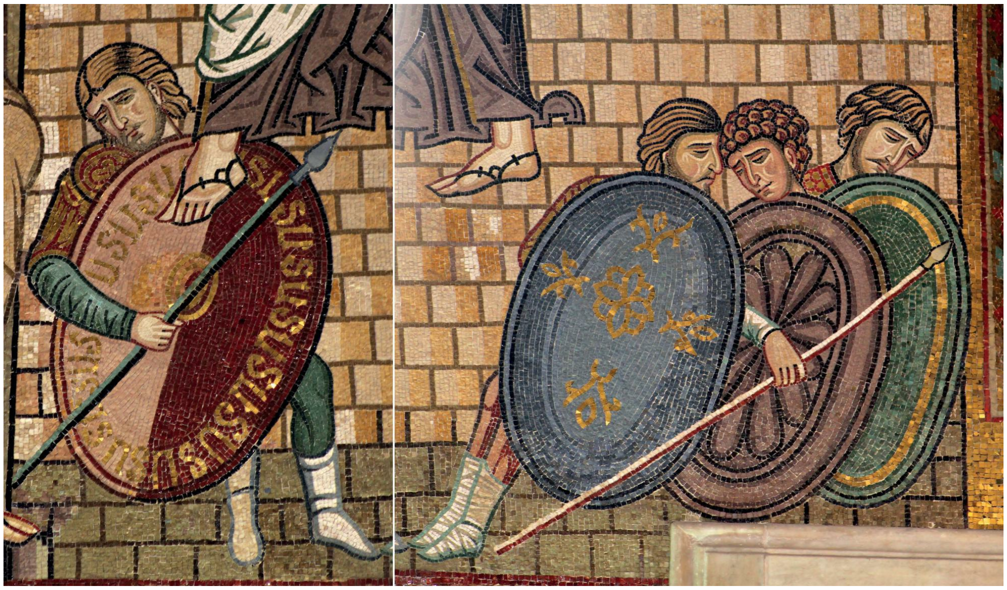
Detail from the architrave at St Marcello Maggiore, Capua, second half of 12th century (see photo **here**). The conical 'nasal helmet' is similar to the specimen from Olmütz. The ringmail hauberk, with long sleeves and an attached hood, is superbly rendered in this carving. Note also the high cantle and pommel arches of the saddle, and, particularly, the two-handed grip on the couched lance.



The second figure has the armour deliberately rendered in a contrasting finish, probably suggesting padded fabric protection. The figure of Bishop Odo on the Bayeux Tapestry has also been interpreted as wearing such ‘soft armour’. Note the Y-shaped chinstrap of the helmet passing down inside the hood. (Both *in situ,* author’s photos)

Ringmail *chausses* for the legs are also visible in this manuscript, and perhaps in the lost mosaic of Brindisi Cathedral (copied by Schulz in 1834 and reconstructed by Guzzo), but that may represent scale protection. Essentially the knight’s protection comprised a hood of iron mail, attached to a ringmail armour reaching the knees; under this hauberk the mail protection assumed the shape of trousers, with the junction at the groin in leather to facilitate movement and riding.

Long hauberks of scale construction are often depicted, clearly differentiated from those of ringmail, with scales overlapping downwards. There are two variants: one (Exultet 710 from Fondi; Passage of the Red Sea) has elbow-length sleeves, and another (Santa Maria del Lago di Moscufo; St George) shows scales down to the wrists. Scale armour is visible on the bodyguards in the famous ivory altar panels of Salerno Cathedral, which Prof V. Pace believes date from the Norman conquest of the city (1077). These figures apparently also wear scale head protection, showing evidence of thick padding around the facial opening. It is not clear if these are representations of infantry or cavalry, though they correspond to the famous 11th-century 'Charlemagne' chess piece of an infantryman from southern Italy, which is variously interpreted as Eastern Roman, Norman, Arab, Lombard or Italic.



'Sleeping guards at the Holy Sepulchre', 1140, from the Palatine Chapel, Palermo. The flat shields are round or oval; some seem to have floral patterns embossed, while that on the left shows halved colours and Kufic script around the edge. (*In situ*; author's photos)

The cavalry chess pieces of the same group also attest to the wide employment of lamellar armour in the region.[1] These hauberks of scale and lamellar construction are not found on the Bayeux Tapestry, which argues for their Mediterranean origin. The hauberks represented in the Palatine Chapel, in scale or mail, show a slit up the front and back for ease when riding; sometimes slits are also visible at the sides.

Under the metallic armour was worn a **padded garment** of linen or felt. Such quilted or padded garments, which in the West culminated in the so-called *gambeson*, had been in widespread use since Roman times. They were sometimes worn alone, or, imitating the Eastern Roman fashion, on top of a metallic cuirass, like the Byzantine *epilorikion* or the *epanoklivanion*.

Both at home and initially in Italy, the Normans employed circular **shields** typical of the Germanic tradition (as also used by the Lombards). These were gradually supplanted by the kite- or almond-shaped shield, which maintained a flat cross-section until the end of the 11th century, evolving into the widely used concave form thereafter. The elongated version typical in the second half of the 12th century is visible in both Eastern Roman and northern Norman iconography.

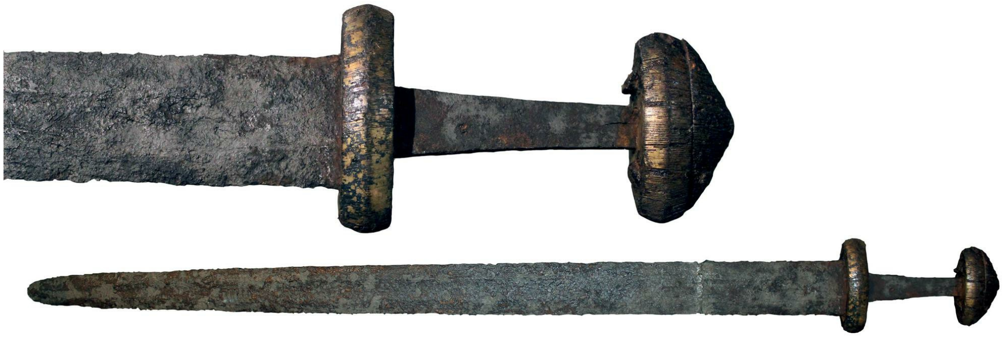
Various iconographic sources show elementary decorative motifs and proto-heraldry between the first decades and the second half of the 12th century. Blazons include geometrical or floral patterns, such as six-petalled flowers surrounding a small metallic boss. Crosses are also visible on shields, and it seems that Count Roger's men displayed them at the battle of Cerami against the Muslims in 1063: (GM, I I, 33: 'we all carry the emblem of Christ'). True heraldry seems to appear only at the end of the 12th century, in the manuscript of Pietro da Eboli.

The shield shows crossed leather handles on the back. Examples used in combination with a spear and long sword are visible on the capitals of Santa Sophia in Benevento (which confirm that both these weapons were also used in boar hunts). The internal colour of the shield is orange-red in some sources (e.g. Vatican manuscript of *c.*1070), while the leather strap is red. The shield could also be grasped by a wooden handle, used primarily by mounted warriors.

Offensive weapons

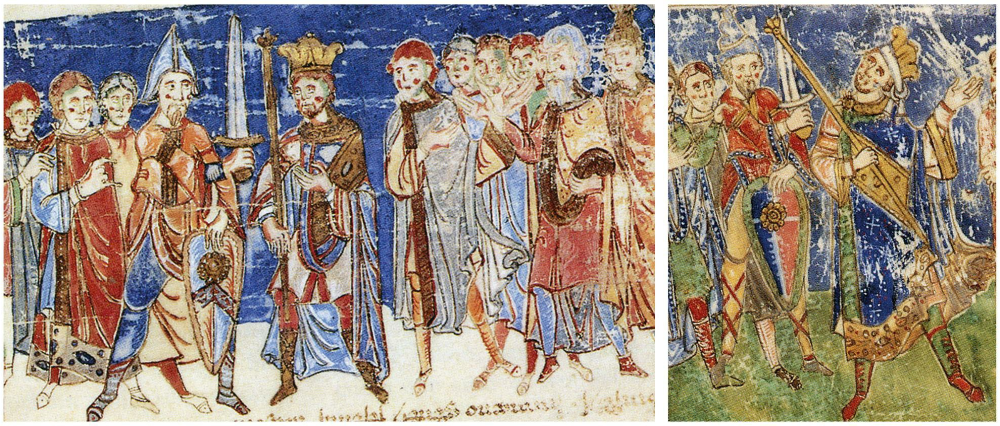
The main weapon of the Norman heavy cavalry was the spear (*hastile*, GM, I, 34; II, 23), of heavy weight and exceeding 2m (more than 6.6ft) in length. We refer above to the use, by compact formations of *milites*, of the **couched lance.** 'Couching' meant holding the weapon firmly immobilized under the right armpit in a horizontal position, pointing at the opponent and aimed by movements of the right hand (*milites* in the Montevergine sanctuary; architrave of St Marcello in Capua; and *pulvinus* of the cloister of Santa Sophia in Benevento). However, the lance was not invariably used underarm: the Exultet 2 of Troia (early 12th century) shows a cavalryman, unarmoured except for a simple conical helmet, using it overarm, exactly as many Normans do on the Bayeux Tapestry. Again, as on that embroidery, spears are often depicted with attached fabric pennons.

The other primary weapon was the long, broad, double-edged **sword.** Heavy, and about 90cm (*c.*35in.) long, such a weapon could dismember an opponent, or (allegedly) even cut an unarmoured man in two (GM, II, 4). The straight, wide blade had parallel edges for most of its length, the better to deliver cutting strokes rather than thrusts with the point. Once, when surrounded by Greeks of eastern Sicily, Count Roger ‘wielded the sword which he carried at his belt as though he was cutting a grassy meadow with a scythe’ (GM, II, 30). A distinct style used among the Lombards was a single-edged short-sword, which some commentators compare to the Norse and Frankish *scramasax*.



Two images of early Norman sword with damascened pommel, 10th–11th century. (Collezione Torlonia di Antichità del Fucino, Castello di Celano, inv. 67626; author’s photos, courtesy of the Collection)

Infantrymen are depicted on the side portal of St Nicola, where knights are accompanied by four *servientes*: three *pedites* and a *balistarius* crossbowman. The *pedites* wear the coat of mail, though it appears different from those worn by the knights, and are armed with javelins and shields. All, including the crossbowman, wear similar helmets. An unarmoured figure at Monreale shows an unusual cap, probably made of leather or other organic material, as does a hunting footsoldier in the cloister of Benevento Cathedral. Details are invisible, since the sculptors omitted to indicate edges where the headgear cover the neck, cheeks and chin. Other infantry from Monreale wear what seems to be a metal skullcap with a broad decorated rim, or soft caps or helmets with some form of flexible neck-guard; some wear no helmets at all.



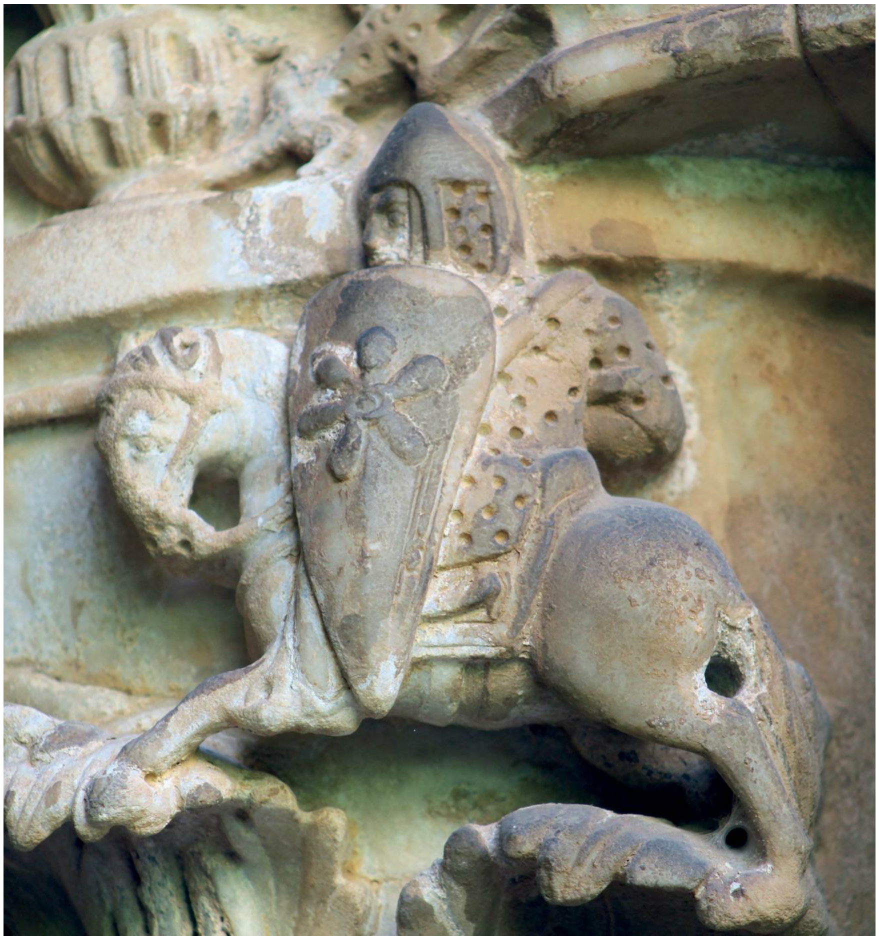
12th-century images of court officials in details from Exultet Roll 724, ‘Protospatharios’, from Benevento. Note the shield decoration painted around the ornate brass bosses: (left) quartered, with an upwards chevron (compare with **Plate G1**); (right) halved, with a narrow white cross. (Casanatense Library, Rome; author’s photos, courtesy of the Library, 2004)

Interestingly, an image of a warrior in Monreale shows an unusual ‘kidney-shaped’ shield, and there are also representations of small bucklers, handheld by soldiers dressed in European fashion undergoing training. Hunting scenes represent infantry carrying long kite shields (Sta Sophia cloister in Benevento); weapons are a simple dagger, or short spears or javelins. Light infantry are often represented armed only with swords and maces. Some Italo-Norman infantry seem to have Eastern Roman swords fitted with sleevelike guard-extensions towards the blade. Some warriors carry the long two-handed axe recalling their Norse origin.

Both the **longbow and crossbow** from northern Europe were widely diffused in southern Italy from the end of the 11th century. The first written evidence for the use of the crossbow is from 1060–70, when Amatus refers to the *arbaleste* and *arbalestiers*. An anonymous Vatican source writes at the time of Roger II, of a sea battle off Syracuse in 1086 between the ships of Roger I and the Amir Bernavert; he states that the Norman victory was largely due to the use of bows but especially of the crossbow, which was unknown to the Arabs. Anna Comnena writes that in 1096 the Eastern Romans first encountered it during a naval battle against the Normans of Salerno. Describing in detail the use of this ‘kind of barbaric bow unknown to the Greeks’, she states that ‘When the cord is released, the arrow leaves the cord with a force against which nothing resists; it can not only penetrate a shield but also an armour, passing through and through’ (*Alexiad*, X, 8). Iconography in southern Italy shows the Norman employment of the primitive manual crossbow without a stirrup.

Muslims

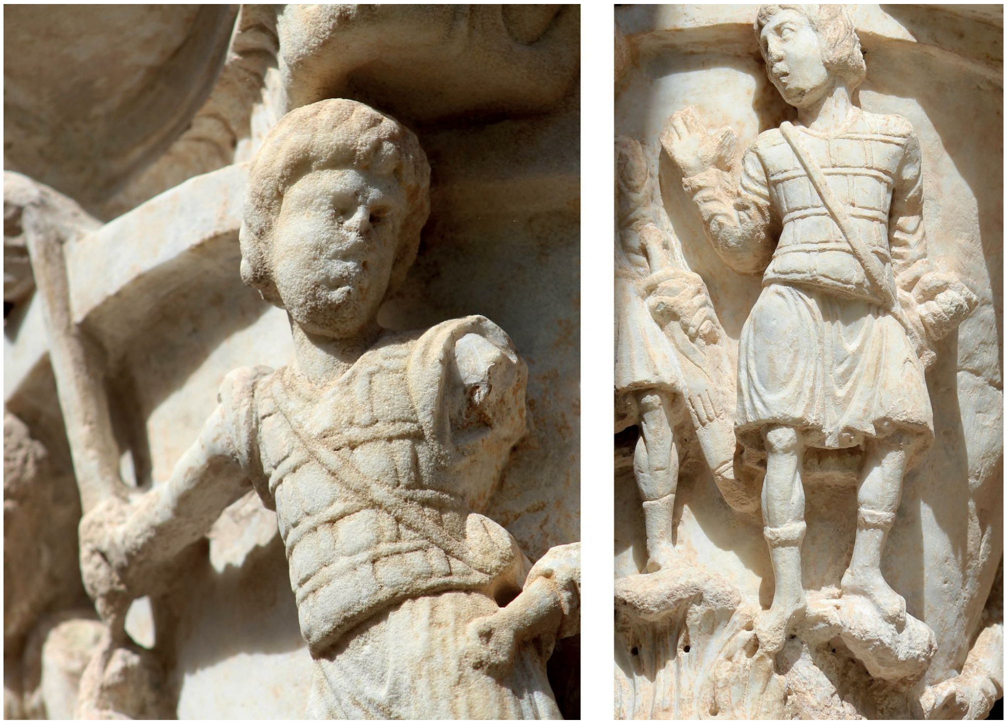
In Sicily, the Normans adapted the existing structures of Arab society only where they found it necessary, and incorporated a strong Muslim component in their armies. The iconography of the Norman cathedrals and Palermo's Palatine Chapel show the characteristically mixed influences of Sicily's several material cultures.



The Norman knights carved on the late 12th-century capitals at Monreale Cathedral show helmets and basically kite-shaped shields which differ in some details. In this case, the straight-topped shield seems to bear an embossed floral or star motif. Interpretations of the helmet differ, including the suggestion that it might have ear-flaps of ringmail. (*In situ*; author's photo)

A warrior in the Palatine Chapel paintings wears a scale-armour hauberk, and he and several others show a characteristic *tirāz* band around the upper tunic sleeve. Two warriors on the architrave of the south door of the church of St Benedetto in Brindisi wear long padded tunics as body protection; these can probably be identified as Arab *al-qutun* armour. One of them is wearing a conical pointed helmet, possibly with a nose-guard.

It is interesting to note that many of the Muslim warriors represented in Palermo carry kite shields like their Norman lords, though in two variants: one conventional, and one with a straight base (the Arab *tariqāh* and *janūwīyah,* both showing Fatimid influence). Otherwise, both infantry and cavalry have round shields; these are often bucklers of pronounced onvex shape (*daraqah*). Saracens with circular shields are documented in Brindisi, in the church of St Giovanni al Sepolcro; at Bari Cathedral; and on a mosaic fragment in Giovinazzo Cathedral. An unarmoured horseman from Monreale shows a tall shield with a flattish top, while another carries the usual round-topped kind. At Monreale, most of the Muslim warriors are represented with round shields, embossed or decorated (lion figures) or sometimes with simple roundels. Those of two 'infidels' on the door of St Nicola at Bari show X-straps on the interior.



'The Massacre of the Innocents': carved capitals in the cloister of Monreale Cathedral, 1174–89. These figures probably depict Byzantine or Muslim infantry wearing scale armour with a banded effect – compare with **Plate E2**. In this and other iconography such armour is associated with figures not wearing helmets. (*In situ*; author's photos)

Single-edged bladed weapons, maces and clubs are usual in the iconography. Of particular interest is the crude representation of a warrior holding a single-edged sword with a curved blade and without quillons; similar but smaller weapons are visible in the late Norman chronicle of Pietro da Eboli. Almost ‘triangular’ (very sharply tapered) swords are visible in the hands of Sicilian Muslim infantry and cavalry at Monreale. The Brindisi architrave shows long spears, possibly with bamboo shafts; a naked negroid warrior at Monreale carries a spear and a round convex shield. On the Palatine Chapel ceiling, warriors wearing Islamic dress brandish the spear with either the Muslim two-handed grip, or single-handed for a downward thrust. One of these spearheads has an almost fleur-de-lis shape, perhaps of Near Eastern origin. Light cavalrymen, dressed in the Mediterranean style common to southern Italians, Greeks and Saracens, are shown armed with sword and shield, or sometimes only with short daggers or javelins.

Maces also are visible at Monreale, carried both by a man probably in Muslim costume and also by apparently negroid warriors, while in the Palatine Chapel a mace is brandished by an Arab camel rider, and on the bronze doors of Trani Cathedral by warriors with an African hairstyle. In all these cases maces are seen in combination with bucklers, further suggesting a Muslim association.

One of the most widely diffused weapons among the Sicilian Muslims was the bow. Clear proof of the importance of Muslim archers within the Norman armies comes from the church of Porclaneta, from Monreale, Bari, the Palazzo della Zisa in Palermo, from the bronze doors of Trani and Ravello cathedrals, from an ivory box in the treasury of the Palatine Chapel, as well as from the late miniatures of Pietro da Eboli. While most of the bows are depicted with angled ‘ears’, simple short bows are represented alongside that more famous composite recurved type.

Greeks (*Rhomaioi*)

Contact with Eastern Roman culture introduced Byzantine equipment during a gradual but consistent process of ‘hybridization’ of Italo-Norman armies. We have noted above examples of fallen enemies being stripped on the field, and of the issue of captured gear. The recruitment of local troops would naturally have led to a kind of cultural ‘osmosis’ between the Normans and southern Italian populations.

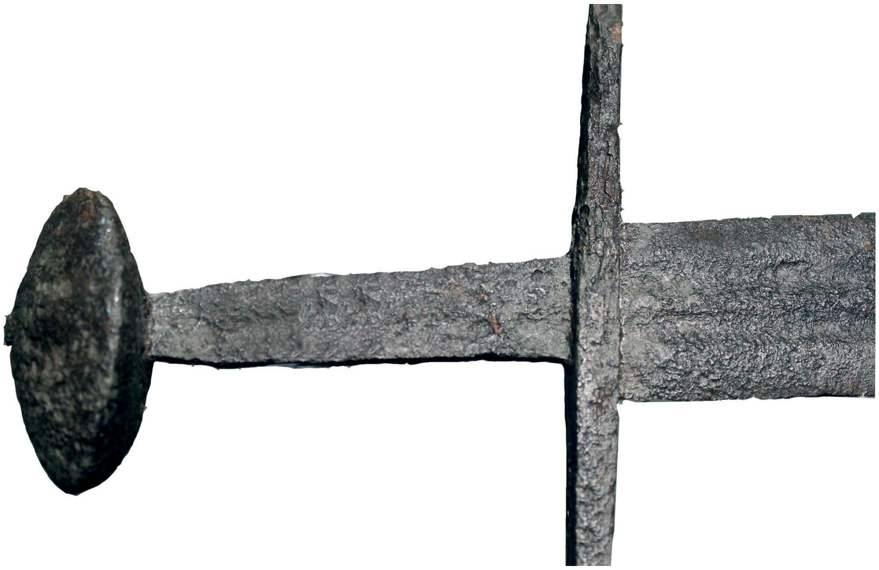
In contrast to the heavy Norman hauberk, the Eastern Romans preferred a waist-length **lamellar armour** (*klivanion)*, with or without *kremasmata* protecting the groin and thighs; they also integrated the use of ringmail with lamellar armour. This was sometimes accompanied by metal greaves, whose use by the oldest Lombard nobility is also documented. They carried 'teardrop-shaped' **shields,** smaller and less cumbersome than the kite shape; these sometimes lacked the central boss which was a salient feature of those used by the Norman cavalry.

Malaterra refers to one Joscelin as 'wonderfully attired in the Greek style' (GM, II. 43, 51), and the bulk of evidence supports the idea that the Normans not only admired Eastern Roman military dress, but soon began to adopt it. Malaterra writes of their suffering in the searing heat of the Mezzogiorno (II, 33, 45), so it is understandable that a Norman *miles* would choose the cooler corselets and tunics favoured by the Eastern Romans.

On the Monreale capitals, warriors equipped in full mail hauberks are seen together with others in **scale armour** worn over a *zoupa* undergarment fitted with *pteryges,* which could well represent the Greek element of the army. The most noticeable feature of these images is that the rows of downwards-overlapping scales are in most cases clearly separated by what seem to be leather strips. These cuirasses are often worn with short sleeves of 'splint' armour, as in the 12th-century Cathedral of St George at Trani, and on a soldier represented in the 1136 Fondi Exultet of the Betrayal (Paris, Bibl. Nat., Ms Nouv Acq. 710). In other cases the scales overlap upwards, seeming more akin to laced lamellar than to scale armour.

The mosaics of the Palatine Chapel and Cefalù Cathedral also show royal bodyguards wearing lavishly worked **'muscled' cuirasses** echoing the Greco-Roman tradition, probably made of *cuir bouilli*. These also show Byzantine influence in rows of lappets and *pteryges* presumably attached to an under-armour garment. Upper arm protections in leather (*manikelia*) are scale or lamellar. The officers in the iconography display *zonì* sashes knotted around the breast, a typical symbol of rank since the Classical and Hellenistic ages.

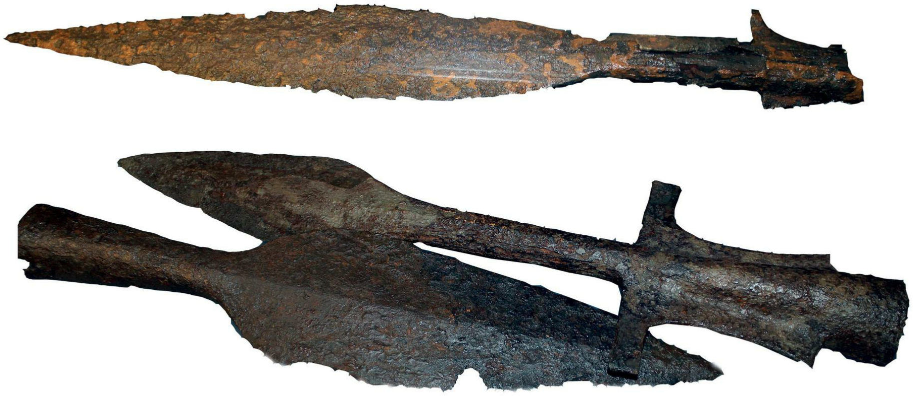
Helmets were mainly spherico-conical (Monreale). In some cases, a turban was almost certainly wrapped around the helmet, in others it was simply wrapped around a *phakiolion* cap. **Shields** might be round and embossed, although the Palatine Chapel mosaics and the Monreale capitals also show wide oval shapes, sometimes strongly convex, which recall Eastern Roman infantry equipment.



Norman sword, 12th century, with ovoid pommel riveted to tang, and long quadrangular quillons. A similar weapon, with the blade gradually tapering to a sharp point, is even seen carried by one cavalryman in Muslim dress represented on the ceiling of the Palatine Chapel, Palermo. Most Muslim swords are shown either without quillons or with asymmetric quillons. (Collezione Torlonia di Antichità del Fucino, Castello di Celano, inv. 67625; author's photos, courtesy of the Collection)

Swords generally belong to the Eastern Roman tradition, with black scabbards decorated with gold furniture; other examples with large quillons follow the Western typology. **Spears** are often painted in different colours (e.g. green), or even in two colours (e.g. silver and black, white and red – for example, see **Plate E2**). Javelins and spears usually have typical Mediterranean foliate iron heads.

King Roger II modelled his court upon that of Constantinople, including the military dress of his Greek officers. His own garments, preserved in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, show elaborate work in bullion thread and precious stones, which suggests that surviving mosaics accurately represent the splendid clothing of the most powerful men. Usually the warriors are shown wearing white tunics, brown or blue *anaxyrida* (tight-fitting trousers) decorated with floral and geometrical patterns, and white boots.



(Top) ‘Winged’ spearhead, 11th–12th century. (Museum of Norman Civilization, Ariano Irpino; author’s photo, courtesy of the Museum)
(Bottom) Massive 11th-century spearhead, and winged spearhead. The use of winged spears for both hunting and war is attested in the iconography, including folio 72r of Vat. Ms.1202, which shows a brown shaft. (Collezione Torlonia di Antichità del Fucino, Castello di Celano, inv. 67619–67623; author’s photos, courtesy of the Collection)

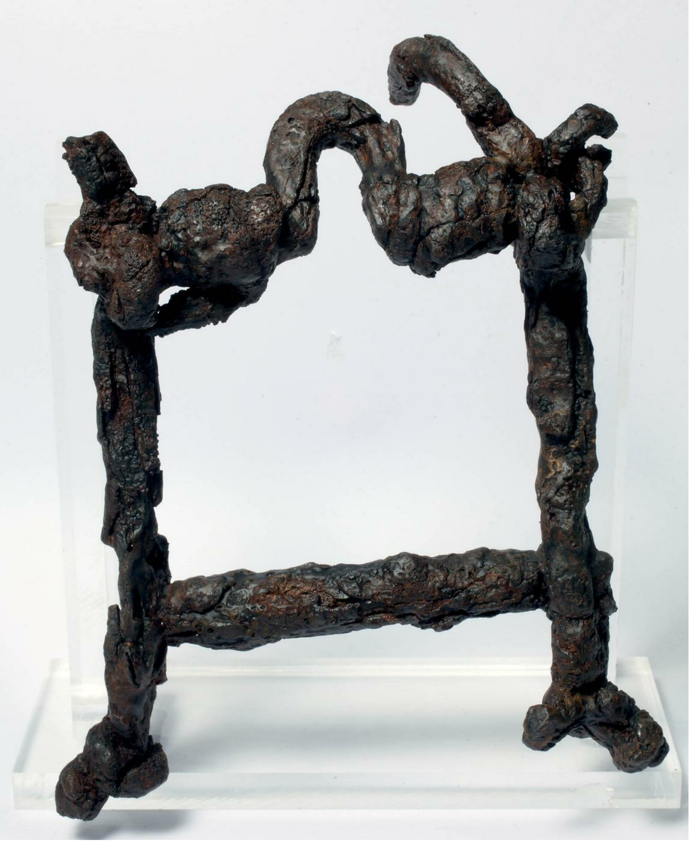
Horse equipment

The horseman represented on the 11th-century Aversa slab, and a description of Roger II in a civil context by Amatus (AM, II, 44), both suggest that the rider’s feet extended well below the horse’s belly, though these may be smaller riding palfries rather than battlefield *destriers*. Warhorses were fitted with heavy trappings: cloth caparisons, a saddle secured by a double girth (Ms. Lat. 1202, Vat. Library, folio 72r) and martingale, heavy stirrups on long straps, and a bridle with chinstrap and bit (panels of Trani Cathedral).

In the Vatican manuscript, the saddle is reinforced by decoratively placed nails, and also apparently shows red precious stones. The bridle and leather harness are red; the saddle covering, medium blue; the girth, blue edged in red. The colour of the saddle in the Exultet 2 from Troia is ivory. That saddles could be valuable is proved by the fact that after Count Roger’s horse was killed during a clash with Greeks and Arabs, he walked back towards his men carrying his saddle.

At the time of Hastings, the saddle appears to have had fairly tall, perpendicular arches front and back and long stirrup-leathers, allowing the rider to keep his upper body and his legs relatively straight and to exert strong pressure on the stirrups. Some images from the early 12th century, such as the north doorway of St Nicola at Bari, seem to show shorter stirrups and flexed legs – perhaps influenced by contact with other military cultures.

On the Monreale capitals, the horsemen's saddles are secured by double girths. This system was probably introduced during the 12th century; it is not visible at St Nicola in Bari, nor in any 11th-century images, but is depicted in the 12th-century Exultet and in the Palatine Chapel.



Iron bridle bit, probably early 11th century, found in Antenisi district near Cannae. (Antiquarium, Canne della Battaglia; author's photo, courtesy of the Museum)

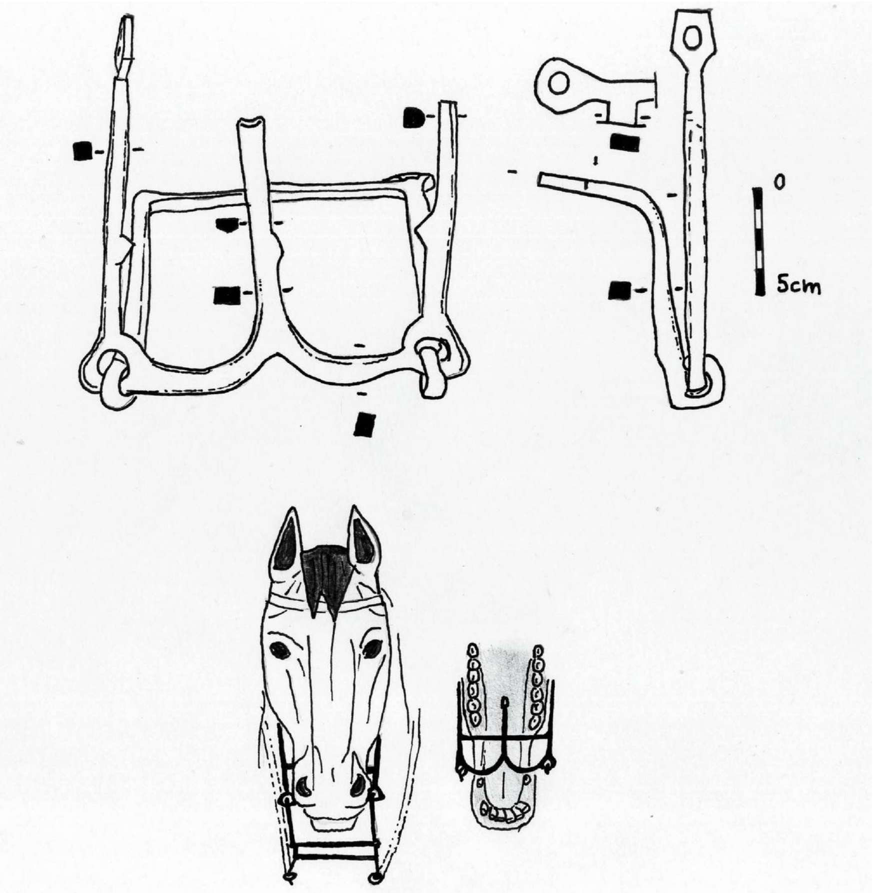
There the horses (perhaps belonging to Greek or Muslim components of the army) show *antilina* and *postilina* decorated in gold. Their severe curb bits have a crossbar or chain beneath the animal's chin to join the lower ends of the two cheek-pieces. (This system, perhaps passing from Muslims to Normans and thence to northern France and England, is visible in 12th-century Sicilian ivories, and in the Fondi Exultet 710.) The saddles are all of Middle Eastern type, with rounded skirts, normally two girths, a flared and moderately high cantle, and a lower pommel. According to Nicolle, these saddles had wooden or bone frames and leather covers. Interestingly, most of them show the presence of crupper straps, as used without interruption in southern Italy, Byzantium and the Muslim world.

Standards

In Italy the Normans found an Eastern Roman artistic culture influenced by the veneration of military saints, particularly St George. According to the pious Malaterra, St George appeared to the Normans before the decisive battle of Cerami against the Sicilian Saracens (GM, II, 33):

> ‘They were hastening towards the battle when there appeared a knight, splendidly armed and mounted on a white horse, carrying a white banner *(album vexillum)* surmounted by a brilliant cross fixed to the top of his lance. He rode in front of our line … and then he made a mighty attack upon the enemy just where their ranks were thickest. When our men saw this they were overjoyed ... many of them [also] saw the banner with the cross hanging from the top of the Count’s lance, which could not have been placed there except through Divine power’.

According to an ancient oral tradition written down only in the 15th century, Pope Nicholas II, at Melfi on the eve of Count Roger’s Sicilian expedition in 1059, presented Roger with a standard ‘painted by St Luke’ representing the Madonna and Christchild. After many adventures, in 1348 this allegedly reached the Cathedral of Piazza Armerina, where it was venerated under the title of ‘St Mary of the Victory’. Analyzed in recent years, this rectangular cloth measuring 137 x 72cm (53.9 x 28.3in) has been confirmed as dating from the 11th century. On an all-gold background, it represents the Virgin Mary painted in the traditional *glykophilousa* pose, with the Greek-lettered acronym for ‘Mother of God’ (Μήτηρ του Θεοῦ), and with images of angels on the upper sides (see **Plate C3**). Studies by art scholars have concluded that the flag follows the style of the Roman painters of the mid-11th century.



Tinned or silvered iron bridle bits, early 11th century, from site of count's residence at Andone in Charente, France. (Drawings by Andrea Salimbeti from Portet & Bourgeois)

Note

1 See David Nicolle's Elite 9, *The Normans,* pages 48–49 for detailed photos of these pieces now in the Cabinet des Médailles, Bibl. Nat., Paris. Dr Nicolle's book also includes several other photos of iconography relevant to our subject, on pages 30, 32, 58, 60, 61 & 62.

REPRESENTATIVE BATTLES

Civitate, 18 June 1053

This battle took place between the troops of the German-born Pope Leo IX and a Norman army led by Humphrey d'Hauteville, outside the town of Civitate (today, Civitella) on the banks of the river Fortere in Apulia.

The Normans, with 3,000 horsemen (but fewer than 1,000 lances) and some 500 infantry, had advanced through a hostile region offering few provisions, and were not seeking battle; they intended to send envoys to the Pope promising obedience, if he would refrain from interfering in their war against Emperor Constantine IX of Byzantium. Turning away from the city of Troia, now occupied by an Eastern Roman force led by the Lombard Argyrus, the Imperial *Catepan* of Italy, the Normans headed for the plain of Civitate. In mid-June, tired and very hungry, they found themselves in front of Pope Leo's 6,000-strong coalition army of Italians, Lombards, and some 1,400 Swabian mercenaries (of whom half were provided by the Pope's relative, the Emperor Henry III). Hoping to avoid a fight against such odds, Humphrey attempted to negotiate, but Leo IX was badly advised by his confident German allies, and hoped for the arrival of Argyrus's force to block the Normans' retreat. William of Apulia writes that the Swabians disdainfully ordered the Normans to lay down their arms at the feet of the Pope, and leave Italy.

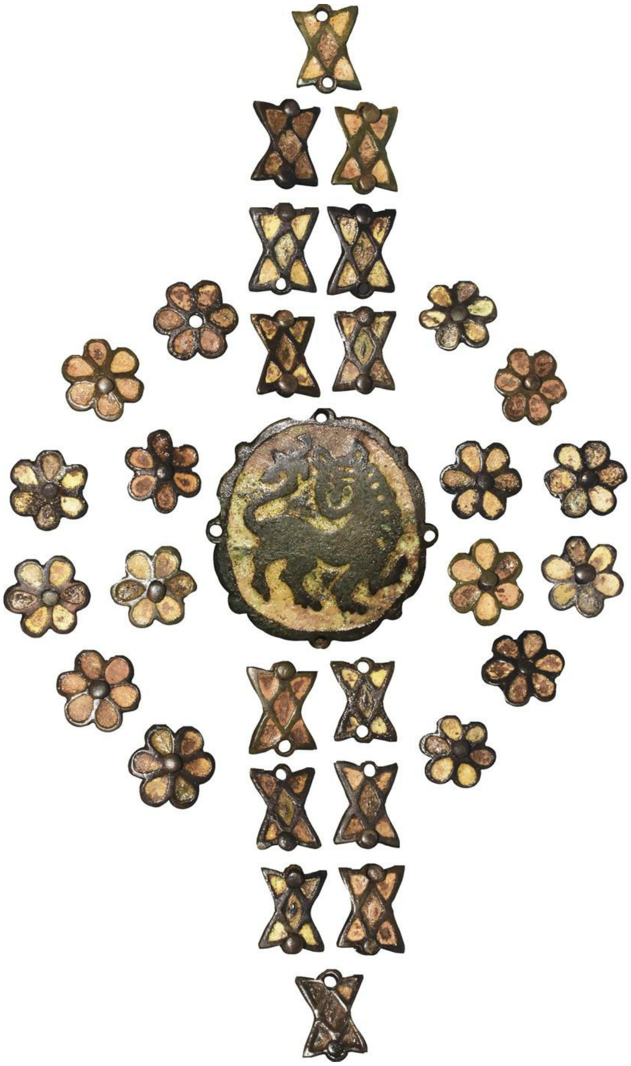
The armies were divided by a low hill south-east of the town, and the battle-lines ran roughly south-west to north-east. The Normans were drawn up in three bodies: on the left and slightly to the rear, Robert Guiscard placed his Norman and Calabrian horsemen and Slavic infantry; in the centre, Humphrey drew up dismounted knights, infantry and archers; and on the right, Richard Drengot of Aversa had his heavy cavalry. Their infantry were local, from Benevento, Telese and Boiano.

The Pope's Swabian knights were arrayed in the centre opposite Count Humphrey, and the Italians, led by Prince Rudolfo of Benevento and Duke Gerard of Lorraine, were drawn up on their left opposite Richard of Aversa. The latter comprised detachments from Latium, Campania, Gaeta, the Marca Anconitana and the Marsi.

When the battle began, the Normans quickly advanced to the vantage point of the hill crest. Their right-wing heavy cavalry then made a determined charge, which broke the front line on the Italian left into disordered retreat and penetrated into the rear, where they swung left to range along the bank of the river, cutting men down and sowing confusion.

In the centre, however, Humphrey faced strong resistance from the Swabians, who retook the hilltop after see-sawing confrontations between the infantry shield walls. The Norman centre was in some peril, when Robert Guiscard brought his men forward on the left to extend the Norman front and take the Swabians in the flank. William of Apulia digresses from his narrative of the battle to heap praise on Robert for his personal prowess, dwelling upon the carnage he inflicted (GP, II, 235b–239). The Swabian swordsmen retreated, but did not give up, forming a solid formation to resist all attackers as the battle raged on. There could be no question of either side asking or giving quarter, and when Richard of Aversa’s cavalry rallied and rejoined the battle, the papal defeat became unavoidable. Archaeological finds on the battlefield seem to confirm an account that the bodies of the slain Swabians were later hacked to pieces.

After the defeat of his troops, Pope Leo IX was handed over to the Normans by citizens of Civitate hoping to avert reprisals. Well treated in captivity in Benevento, he was released after recognizing the Normans’ rights and conquests, but he died less than a year after returning to Rome.



Decorative enamelled Norman horse-harness fittings, 11th–12th century, showing considerable Mediterranean or Levantine influence and probably made in southern Italy. The central plaque shows a lion image in high relief. (Private collection; photo courtesy of Timeline Auctions)

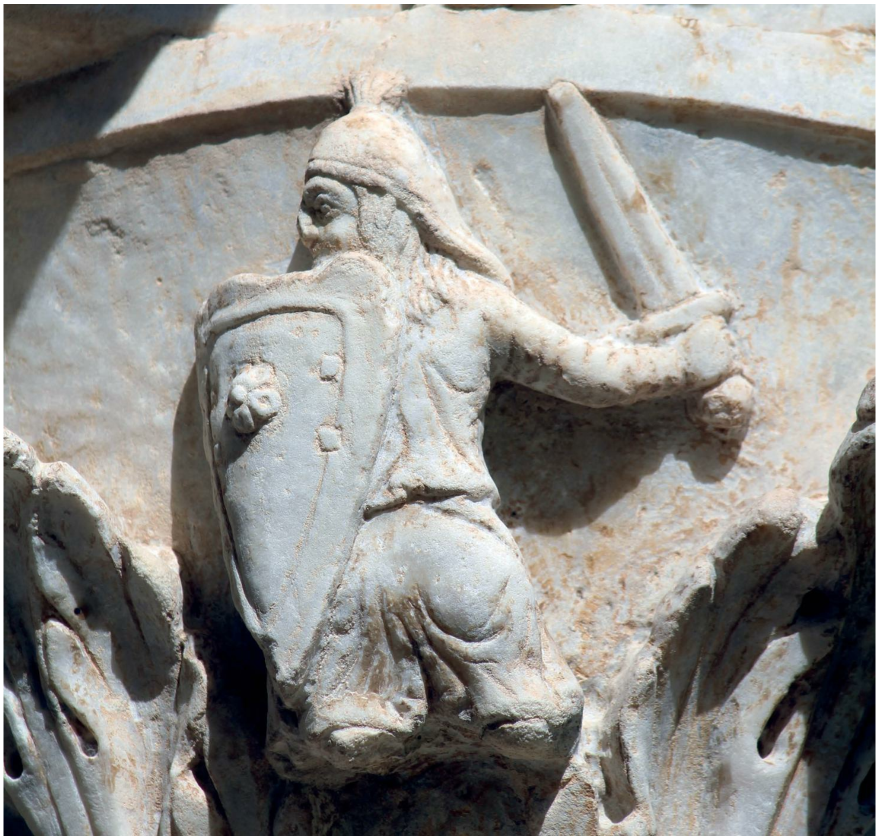
The battle of Andria, 1155

More than 80 years after the fall of the last Eastern Roman stronghold at Bari, the Emperor Manuel Comnenus, with the aid of Apulian rebels, made a determined attempt to reconquer the lost Italian possessions. Towards the end of summer 1155, Count Robert de Bassonville of Loritello, at the head of the Apulian revolt, met the Imperial commander Michail Palaeologus in Vieste. The two swiftly struck an agreement: the nobles who rose against the King of Sicily would enjoy economic and political favour in Constantinople, and the Kingdom of Sicily would once again become part of the Eastern Roman

Empire. The first objective of the combined forces was Bari, which quickly surrendered, and its royal castle was then destroyed by the citizens.

When the Sicilian army of King William I ‘the Evil’ met the Imperial and rebel army near Andria, according to Kinnamos, the Normans fielded 1,800–2,000 horse and very large numbers of infantry, while their opponents numbered just 600 horsemen and an unknown number of footsoldiers consisting largely of mercenaries, including such exotics as Cumans and Alans alongside locally hired Normans. The Normans were at first surrounded, but Richard de Lingèvres, Count of Andria, broke out of the encirclement with a sizeable force. He was closely pursued by John Doukas and Robert de Bassonville, who caught up with him just as he reached the walls of his city. Since Andria was unprepared for a siege, Count Richard decided to turn and confront his pursuers.

The Imperial army then drew up in three lines: the first of Cumans and infantry archers, the second of cavalry under Robert de Bassonville, and the third under Doukas himself, comprising the rest of the cavalry. Richard de Lingèvres charged this array head on, breaking the Imperial front line, then successively forcing back Bassonville’s division, and finally that of Doukas, the latter being nearly captured when he was unhorsed. As a result, the Imperial and rebel troops fell back in disarray, but they were able to re-form behind a long dry-stone wall that marked a field boundary; this was manned by many rallying Imperial infantry, using stones from the wall as missiles against the Normans. The Norman attack now faltered. According to Kinnamos, Richard de Lingèvres rushed at the enemy accompanied by 36 knights, only to be unhorsed by a stone that struck his knee, and was then stabbed to death by one of the Apulian rebels. Seeing this, the rest of Norman troops fled.



Another capital in the cloister of Monreale Cathedral, 1174–89, shows an apparently Saracen or Eastern Roman infantryman, recalling parallels in both contemporary Mozarabic iconography and the Byzantine tradition. The weapon is a straight broadsword, while the unusual helmet has a small crest, cheek-guards, and an extended rear neck-guard. (*In situ*; author’s photo)

Despite this victory and other successes, the Eastern Romans were later deserted by their Apulian allies and Norman mercenaries, and, outnumbered, were eventually defeated at Brindisi eight months later by King William II ‘the Good’ of Sicily. (Incidentally, William ‘the Evil’ and ‘the Good’ were given their sobriquets not for any dramatic character traits, but only posthumously, as judgements by later chroniclers.)

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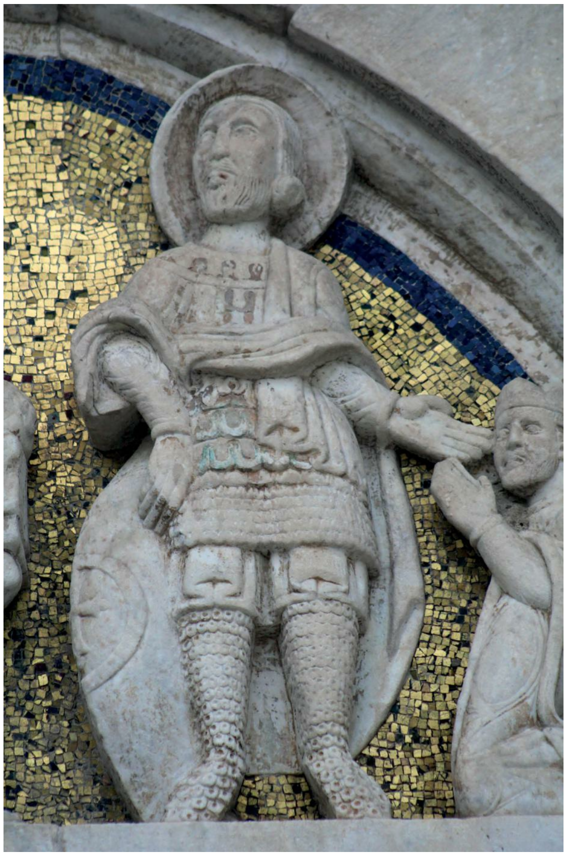

This carving from the church of Sta Sophia in Benevento, 1142–76, represents St Mercurius, whom the Lombards revered as the patron saint of their capital city. He is shown in characteristic Eastern Roman military costume; note the ringmail coat showing beneath the draped upper garment, and apparently mail *chausses* covering the legs and feet. (*In situ*; author's photo)

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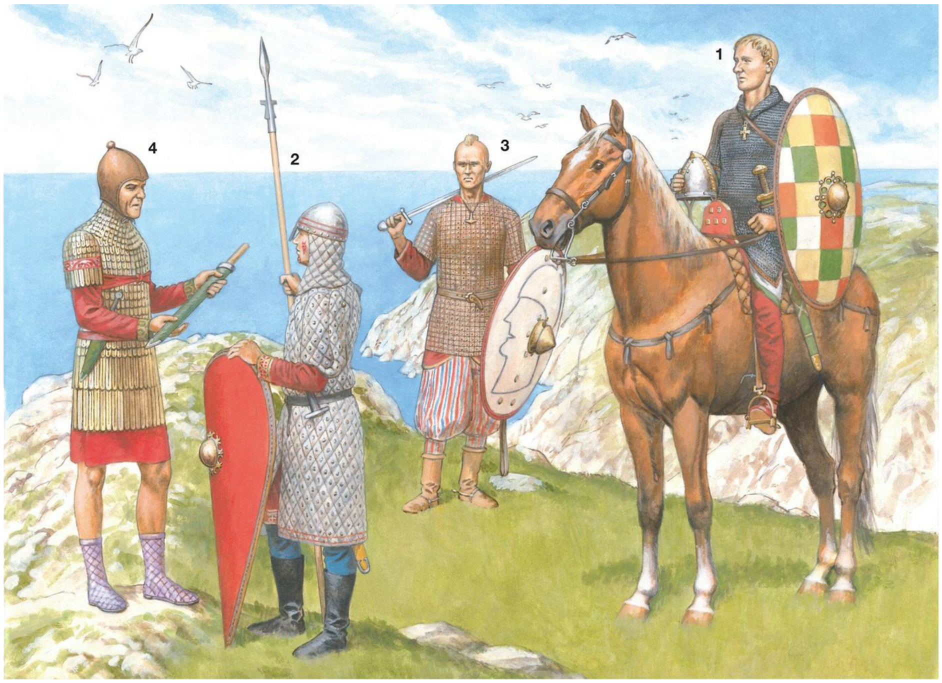
PLATE COMMENTARIES

While these plates show men ready for battle, the rich iconography allows us to form a fairly detailed impression of Italo-Norman dress. The knee-length tunic was sometimes worn open on the chest. If not dressed for war, men and women alike (GM, II, 28) usually wore a cloak, sometimes fitted with a hood (*capucium* – GM, II, 24). With the tunic, men wore tight-fitting trousers and low shoes. The colours shown in miniatures include short blue cloaks with gold embroidery, light green tunics with golden decoration following Byzantine fashion, orange trousers, and blue or off-white puttees (Vat. Ms. Lat. 1202).



1: *Miles Normannus* of Drengot family
2: Norman mercenary, Duchy of Amalfi
3: Norman *miles*, County of Aversa
4: Ducal guardsman, Amalfi

A1: *Miles Normannus* of Drengot family

Probably only the leaders of the first Norman contingents in Italy wore the heavy mail hauberk (Malaterra, GM, III, 38); early forms of hauberk were slit at the sides, and had a coif to protect the face, here shown pushed back around the neck. As represented in the Bible of St Vast and the early 11th-century Gospel of Boulogne, this knight retains a large, late form of Carolingian round shield, and carries a sword of typical northern Frankish style.

A2: Norman mercenary, Duchy of Amalfi

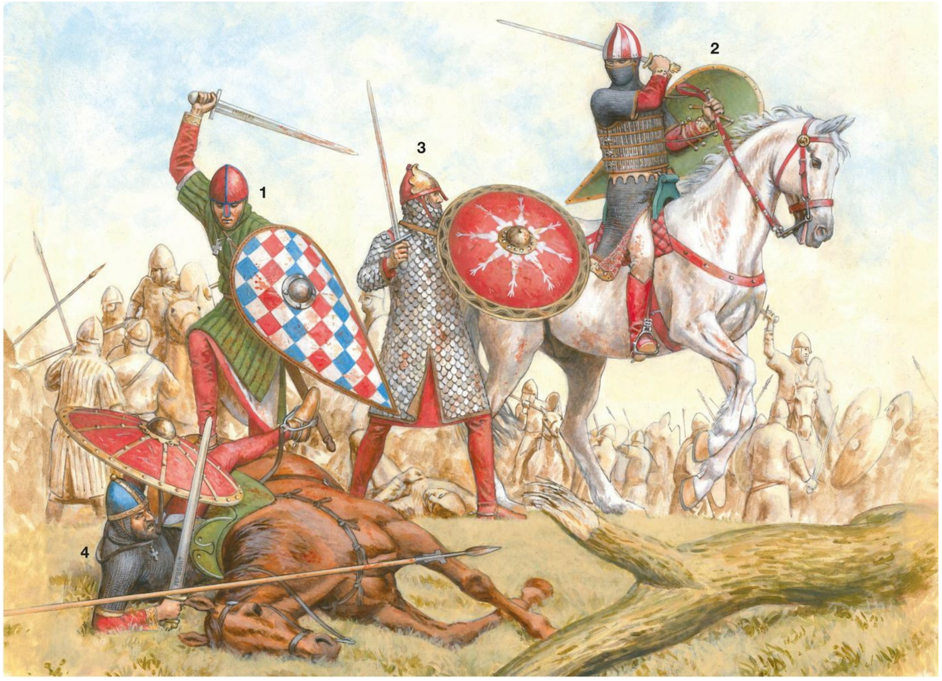
The equipment of this mercenary, copied from Ms. Lat. Nouv. Acq.1930 (Paris, Bibl. Nat.), comprises a conical helmet with a long nasal, furnished with an aventail, and quilted armour made of felt (*neurikon-kavadion*) following the Eastern Roman style. Note the gilded *umbo* on his shield, from a bronze specimen found at Füllinsdorf and identical to those represented in miniatures.

A3: Norman *miles*, County of Aversa

Sources related to the arrival of the Normans agree that early bands were equipped by the Lombards. Here a soldier copied from the Aversa slab has a typical Norman hairstyle and Scandinavian-type trousers, but is clad in a Lombard armour made of leather reinforced with rivets. The outline shield device is closely copied from the Rabanus Maurus codex.

A4: Ducal guardsman, Amalfi

Ivories realized in Amalfi indicate that local militiamen showed marked Byzantine influence. Note the local form of padded headgear, the scale-armour hauberk, the officer’s knotted sash worn round the torso, and the short single-edged sword.



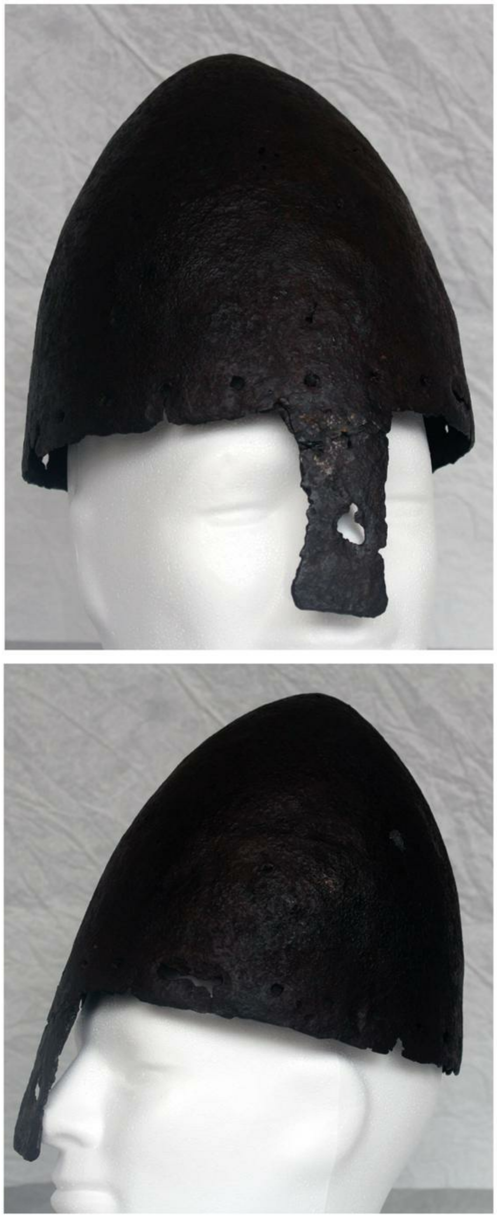
1: Norman *miles*, Hauteville family
2: Robert ‘le Guiscard’ d’Hauteville
3: Swabian *miles*, papal army
4: Lombard *miles*, Benevento

B1: Norman *miles* of Hauteville family

Miniatures in the manuscript *De Universo* of Rabanus Maurus highlight southern Italian equipment of the period. This knight wears a heavy coat covering his short ringmail armour, following the style of the Eastern Roman *epilorikion*. The geometrical device on his shield seems to introduce the developing heraldry of the Hauteville family.

B2: Robert ‘le Guiscard’ d’Hauteville

Robert ‘the Cunning’ wears a ‘Phrygian’ style of helmet, and an Eastern Roman *klivanion* over his mail hauberk. Some authors suggest that, by the second half of the 11th century, hauberks already had extended ringmail face protection leaving only the eyes visible, following an Oriental style. Norman shields had a strap for slinging from the shoulder and two differently angled ‘handle’ straps, so that they could be held either vertically or horizontally. This versatile arrangement allowed the warrior to release his left-hand grip in order to hold the reins or even to brace the lance two-handed.



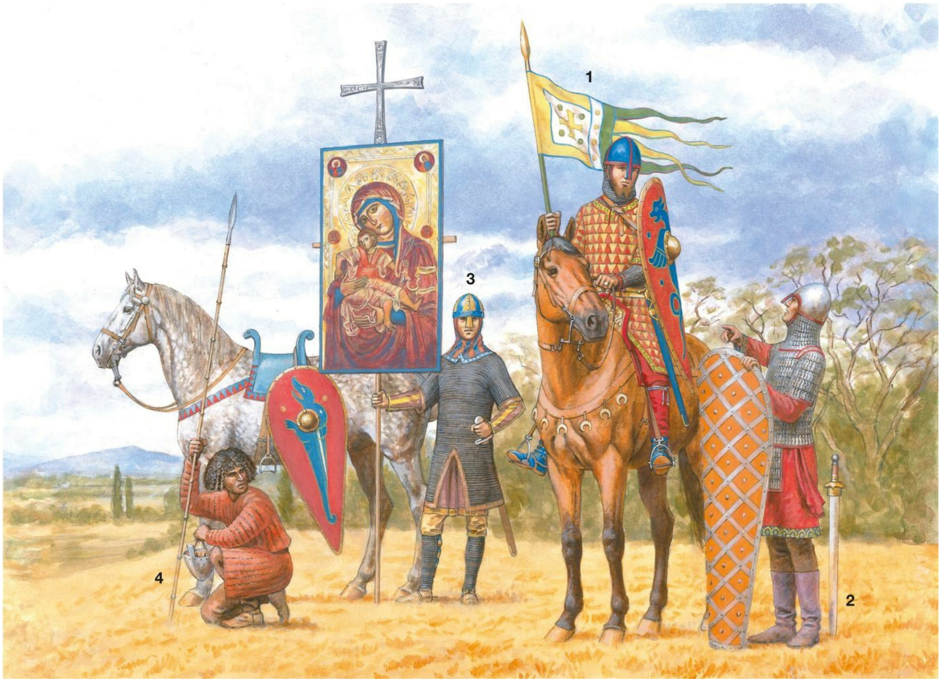
Late 11th- or early 12th-century ‘nasal helmet’, purchased in Salerno in the early 20th century and probably from southern Italy. Closely resembling most helmets in the Norman iconography of the region, it measures 33cm tall with the nasal bar and 24cm without (13 & 9.4in), and 22cm (8.7in) front to back at the rim. Around the edge are 24 rivet holes for attaching a lining. (Museo Marzoli, Brescia; author’s photos, courtesy of the Museum)

B3: Swabian *miles* in imperial German/ papal service

The Swabians were accustomed to dismounting and fighting on foot with sword and shield. Note the scale *lorica squamata* and the helmet, copied from Exultet 710 in the National Library, Paris. The shield decoration is from actual fragments found in France and Germany.

B4: Lombard *miles* from Benevento

The equipment of southern Italian Lombards had long since lost its original Germanic characteristics, but while their accoutrements were generally those of any Western European warrior, they still showed some specific peculiarities. Note this man's helmet, similar to a pointed cap surmounted by a conical apex; the knee-length ringmail armour; the domed rivets on his shield; the sword, and the robust 'winged' spear.



1: Roger d'Hauteville with papal standard
2: *Pedes,* Salerno
3: Lombard *miles* with 'St Mary of the Victory' standard
4: Sudanese *'abīd* slave warrior

C1: Roger d'Hauteville with papal standard

Count Roger is reconstructed from his *trifollaro* coin minted in Mileto. His segmented helmet is painted in the colours seen on the near-contemporary Bayeux Tapestry. He wears quilted protection over an armour made in *jazeran* style, with rings sewn directly onto a padded backing.

C2: *Pedes* from Salerno

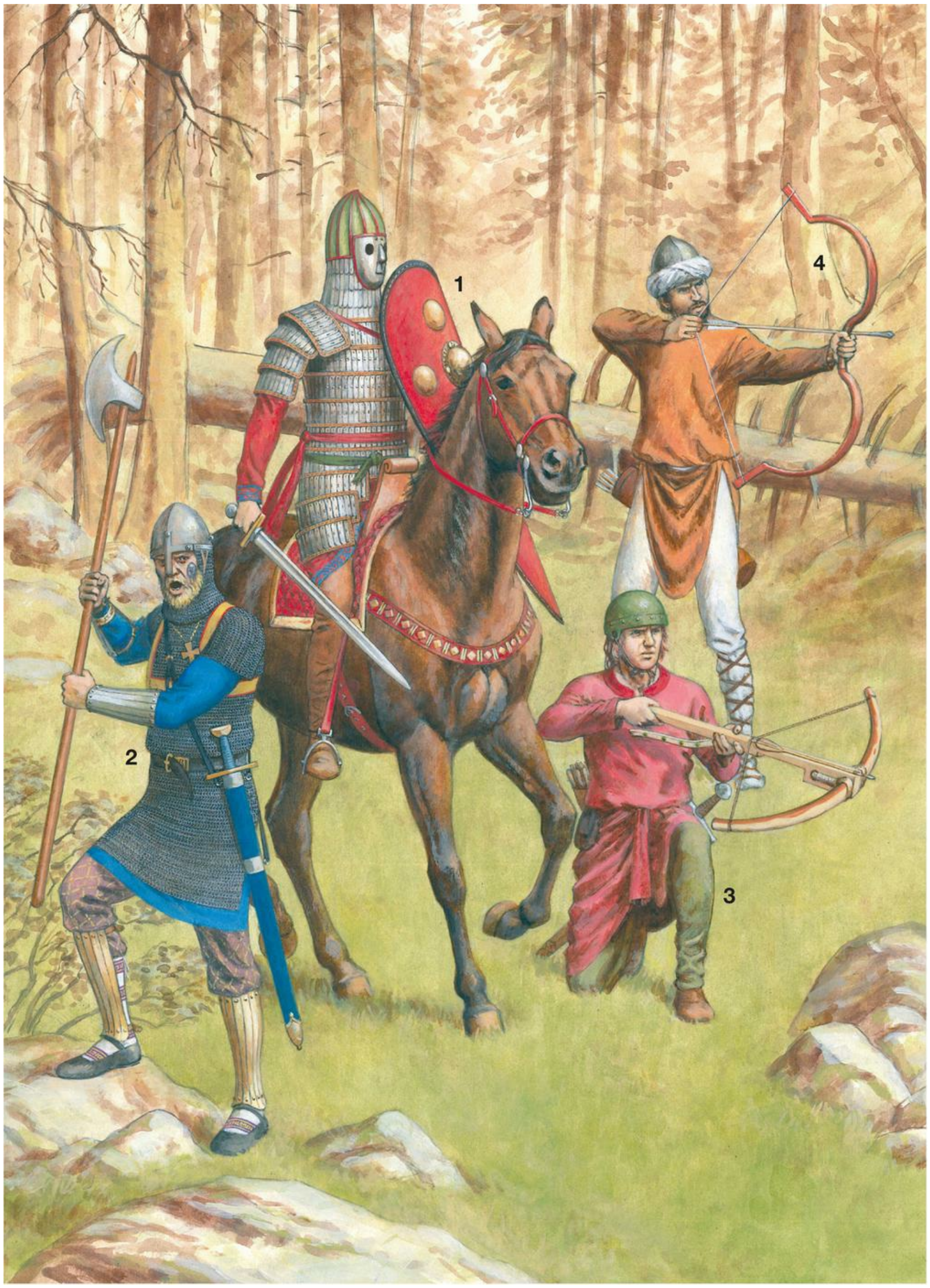
From one of the Italian chess pieces today in the National Library in Paris, with an almost complete Byzantine equipment. His armour is made from two different kinds of *petala* (lamellae) of Eastern Roman typology, as found in the Balkans. The shield (*thureos*) fits the description in the *Sylloge Tacticorum* (XXXVIII, 1), i.e. a tapering shape about 140cm (55 in) long, squared off at the bottom.

C3: Lombard *miles* with standard of 'St Mary of the Victory'

At the end of the 11th century, the reported testimony of Anna Comnena outlines the figure of a heavily armoured northern Italian knight with long shield, long spear, ringmail armour and helmet with nasal – a description perfectly matching the iconography of southern Italian monuments. The shape of the *vexillum* follows the Eastern Roman tradition: a painted cloth panel suspended from a shaft with a transverse bar, surmounted by a cross. The surviving banner in Piazza Armerina Cathedral still shows the holes made by two large nails used to fix the cloth to the bar.

C4: Sudanese *'abīd* slave warrior

This Muslim warrior carries a tall helmet with a short nasal. His padded body protection may be of cotton (*al-qutun* typology); it is composed of vertical and horizontal sewn bands and is tightened at the waist by a belt.



1: Norman heavy *miles armatus*
2: Varangian guardsman, Byzantine army
3: Norman *arbelestier*
4: Muslim *iklīm* local soldier

D1: Norman heavy *miles armatus*

From the door of Bari Cathedral. Note his Phrygian-shaped helmet with a mask, of Byzantine manufacture. The most particular feature is his lamellar armour, of several banded rows bound with leather. This type of *klivanion* was used by Eastern Romans and Muslims alongside waist-length versions. His horse harness also shows Islamic influence; the throat-lash is apparently not attached to the broad collar or *qilādah*.

D2: Varangian guardsman, Alexius Comnenus's army

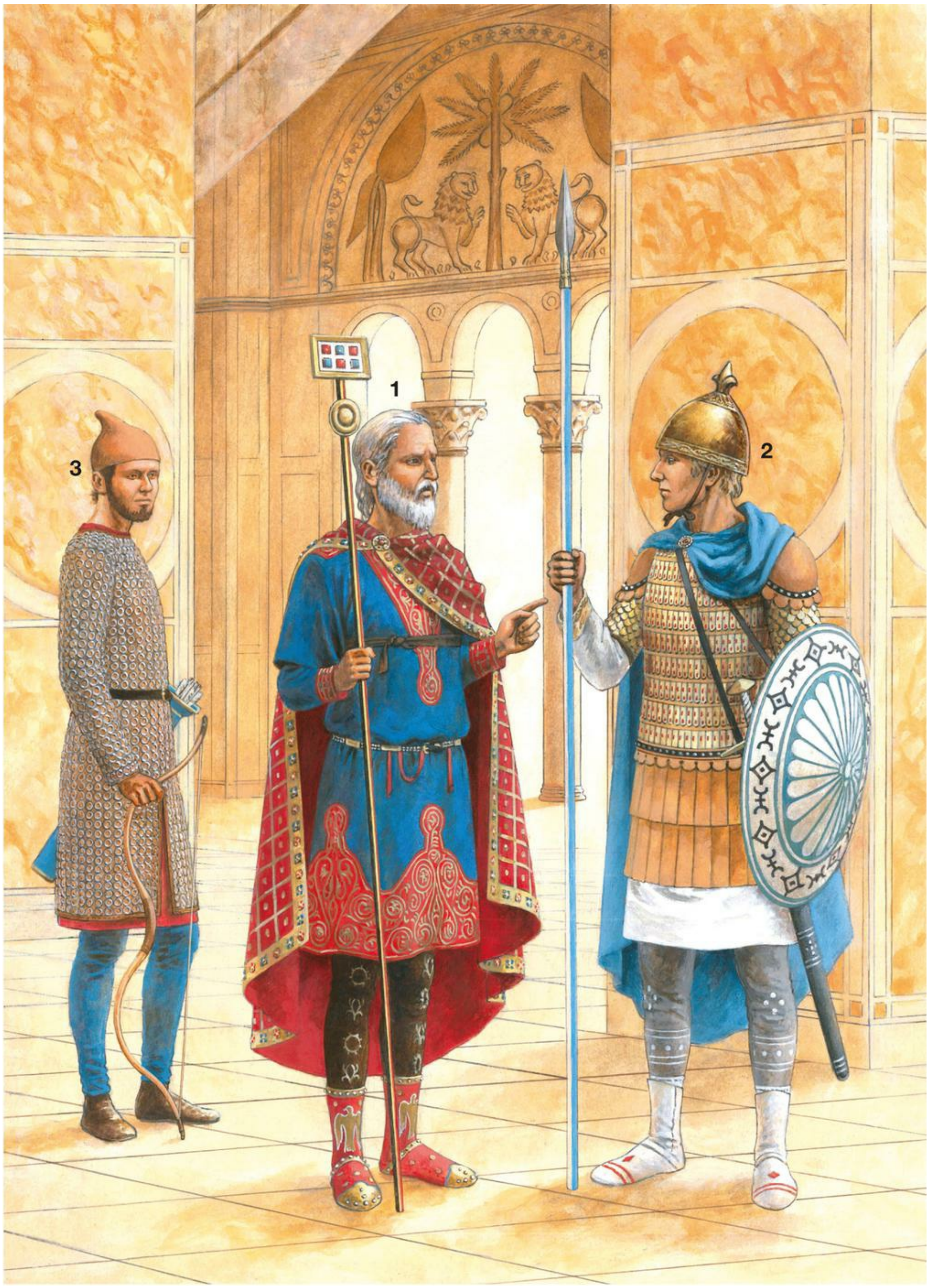
(An opponent of the other figures on this plate, he is positioned for clarity.) This reconstruction of a Varangian from England is partly from finds on the battlefield of Drastar (1087) and elsewhere in the Balkans. Note his pointed helmet, reconstructed from the one-piece specimen from Trnukni Njubinje; the long Danish axe; and his sword based on an example from the village of Govezhda. Tattoos were not uncommon among the guardsmen.

D3: Norman *arbelestier*

This crossbowman wears a low, domed helmet from the Torlonia Collection at Celano castle; of Islamic influence, its shape foreshadows the Western *cervellière*. Note the large quillons of his sword. His crossbow is copied from an original specimen from Altendorf. His shoes might be Balkan sandals, as described by Malaterra.

D4: Muslim *iklīm* local soldier

Usually the Muslim infantry are depicted dressed in a simple knee-length tunic, wide trousers, and low shoes or sometimes boots. Interestingly, one of the archers represented on the panels of Trani Cathedral shows the tunic tucked inside the trousers at the sides, leaving the front hanging like an apron at the groin. The Trani panels also provide one of the few representations of conical helmets worn by Muslim archers.



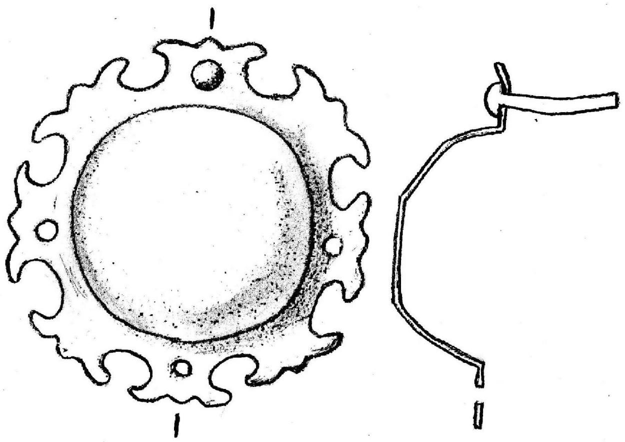
1: George of Antioch
2: *Archon* in ceremonial armour
3: *Rhomalos* sailor

E1: George of Antioch

‘Greeks’ or Eastern Romans (men recruited from historic Byzantine territories) were employed by the Kingdom of Sicily as guardsmen, archers, and especially sailors. The famous admiral Georgios of Antiochia figures in a mosaic in the Martorana church at Palermo that he himself had built. Senior officers of the Sicilian court wore *divetisia* (long-sleeved tunics) in blue and off-white, embroidered with *segmenta*, *clavi* and *orbiculi* in gold thread, in combination with wide purple or white rectangular cloaks (*chlamydes*) embroidered with golden *tabulae*. It is interesting to note that representations of such *archontes* show reddish boots (*toubia*) highly decorated with bullion thread and pearls.

E2: *Archon* in ceremonial armour

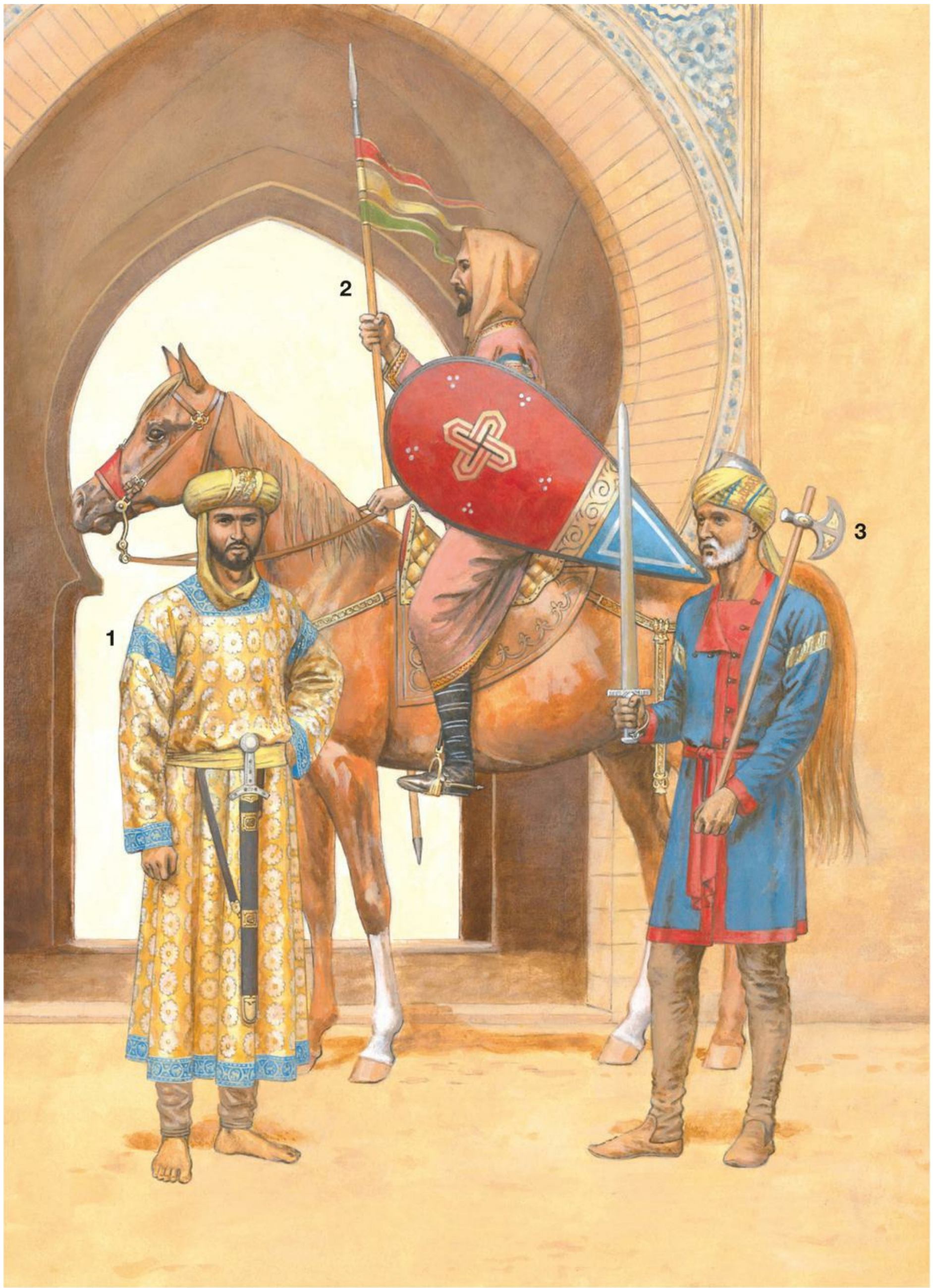
The kingdom's senior officers of Greek heritage may be reconstructed from warrior saints depicted in Cefalù Cathedral, who wear gilded scale and lamellar armours in combination with an organic under-armour garment (*zoupa*) fitted with *pteryges*. Such short scale armours, resembling other examples from southern Italy, were long popular in the Eastern Roman world. Note the spherico-conical helmet, and the Kufic decorations of his shield.



Gilded brass shield boss, last quarter of 11th century, found at Füllinsdorf, Switzerland. Diameter 7.2cm (2.8 in); length of rivet 2.5cm (0.9in). (Drawing by Andrea Salimbeti from Marti, Meyer & Obrecht)

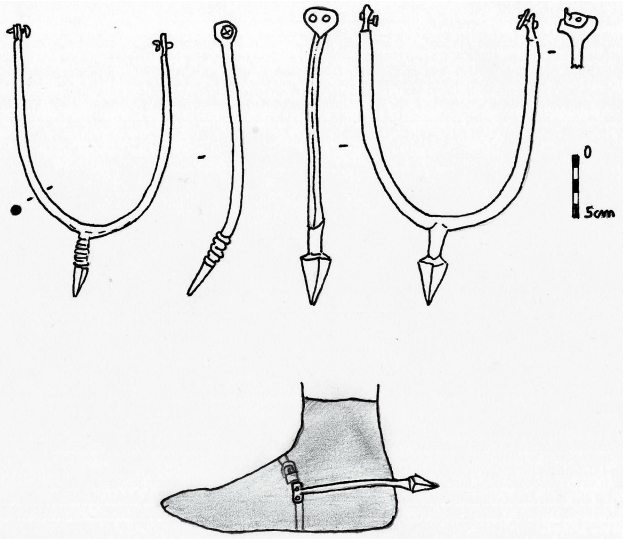
E3: *Rhomaios* sailor

A long-sleeved mail *hauberk* is visible on this possible Greek marine archer, a member of the local crews recruited by George of Antioch for his fleet. Note the tall Balkan cap, the sandals described by Malaterra *('scarpis, quibus pro calceariis utuntur')*, and the composite bow.

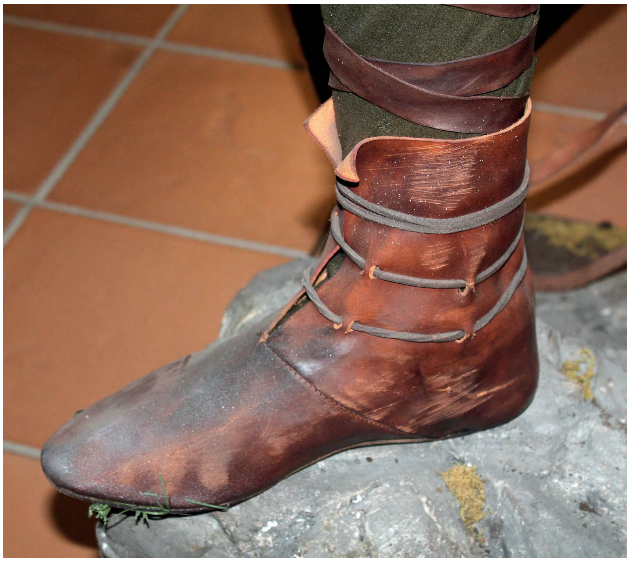


1: Arab *qa'īd*
2: Arab cavalryman, treasury guard
3: Arab infantryman, treasury guard

The same iconography that allows our reconstructions of Italo-Norman warriors includes images of the Muslim component in the armies of the Kings of Sicily. The most distinctive element is the wearing of a loose turban, long loose tunics, and wide trousers to knee length or longer. A scarf or cloak is often slung across the chest and over the arm; this might also be used as rudimentary protection, or draped across the shield.



Prick-spurs, tinned or silvered iron, early 11th century, from the count’s residence at Andone (Charente), France. (Drawings by Andrea Salimbeti from Portet & Bourgeois)



Reconstruction of Italo-Norman footwear, from iconography and fragments. (Museum of Norman Civilization, Ariano Irpino; author’s photo, courtesy of the Museum)

F1: Arab *qa’īd*

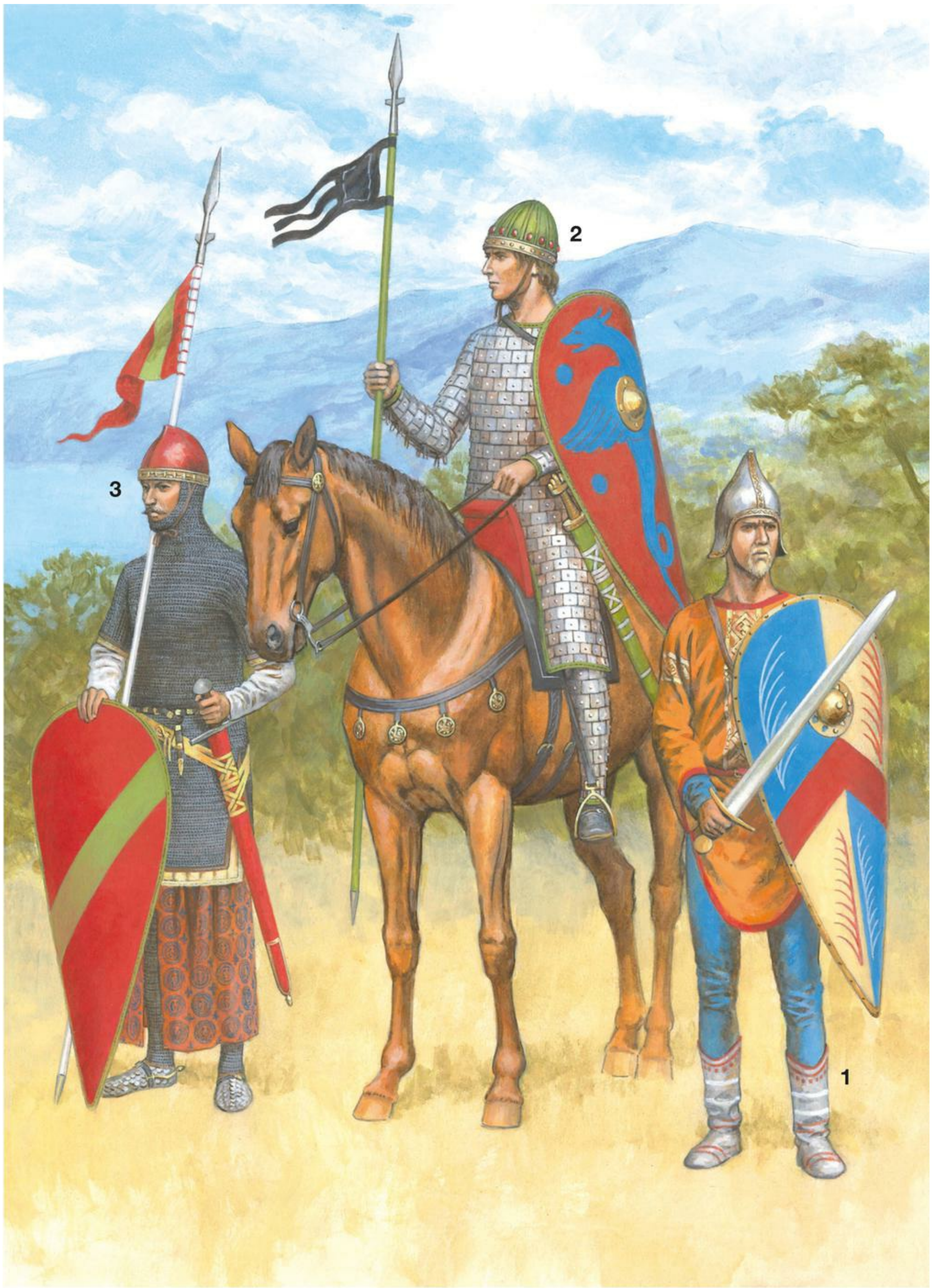
The complicated Norman court ceremonial performed in Sicily embraced a mixture of Byzantine and Muslim forms. The local soldiers on this plate are copied from the figures in the Palatine Chapel ceiling paintings at Palermo, probably representing members of elite guard units which are known to have recruited among Muslims. The turbans shown are of two types: those with the *muhannak* loop below the chin, which indicated military rank, and those without. All the swords represented in the ceiling paintings are straight, but they show a great deal of variety. Most of the blades have rounded rather than pointed ends, showing Muslim or Eastern Roman influence.

F2: Arab cavalryman, treasury guard

The horseman wears a tunic featuring a *tirāz* band (just visible above the shield edge). His typically Norman kite-shaped shield shows a decorative pattern recalling that of a southern Italian chess piece now in the French National Library. The pennon composed of three streamers was popular in both the Muslim and Christian worlds. In the Palatine Chapel paintings, the horses of the Arab element of the army are all depicted with bridles incorporating a noseband.

F3: Arab infantryman, treasury guard

Note the turban without the *muhannak* displayed by the *qa'īd*. Axes were rare in Sicily, but one is shown in the Palatine Chapel paintings in the hands of a turbanned footsoldier, who also carries a sword. One axehead shape, seldom seen outside 12th-century Sicily, shows an extension of the blade upwards, rather than downwards towards the haft in the typical asymmetrical form of European battleaxes. Others, like that illustrated here, have broad, half-moon-shaped blades of which the two end-points almost touch the haft above and below.



1: Lombard royal *protospatharius*
2: Norman armoured *miles*, Moscufo
3: *Miles feudatus terrarius*

G1: Lombard royal *protospatharius*

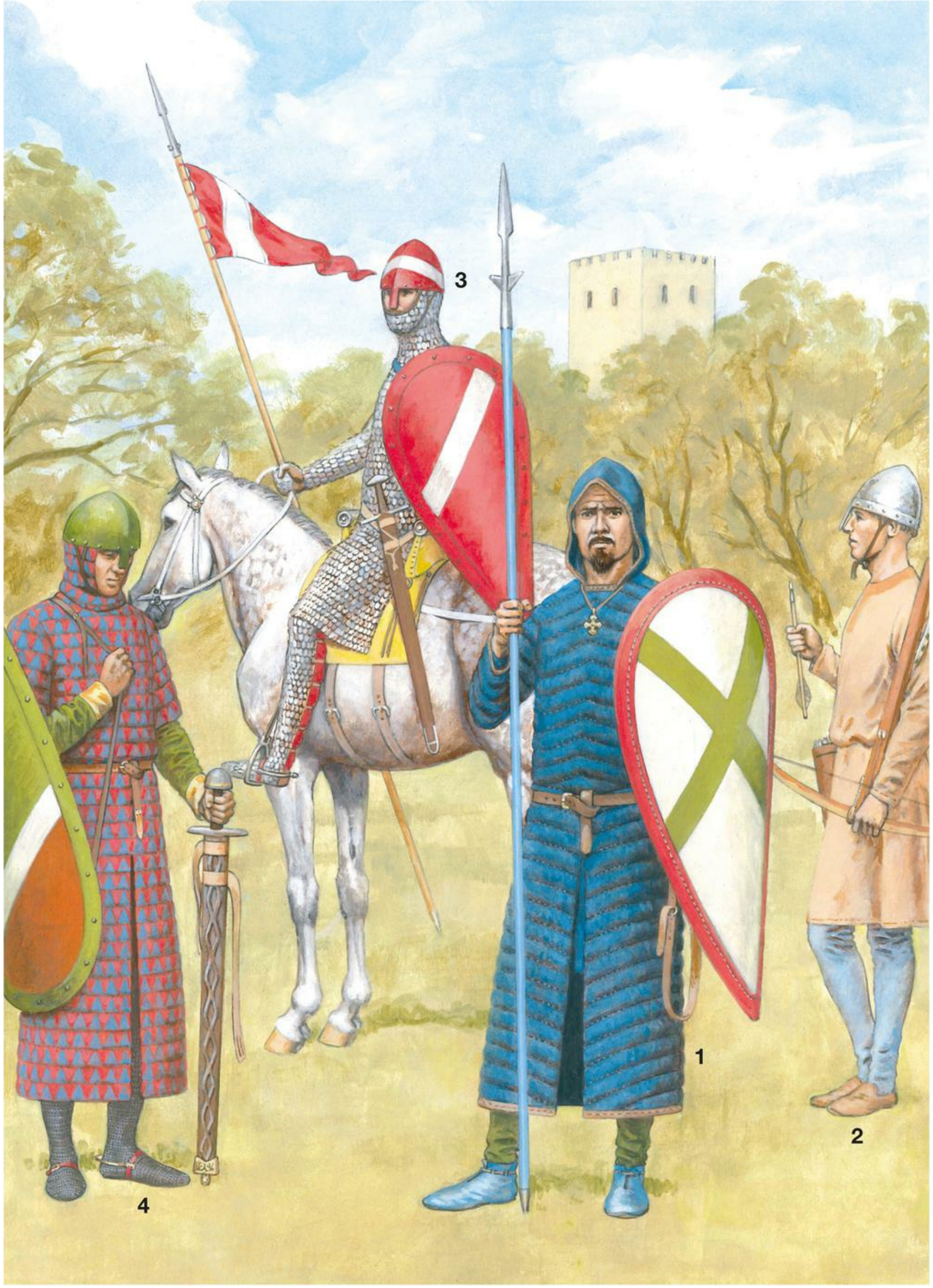
This court official serving as an officer of a city militia wears a long-sleeved tunic; in the second half of the century, the embroidered decoration typically incorporated Italic with Eastern Roman or Muslim styles. Note the variant of the Phrygian helmet, and, importantly, the proto-heraldic painting of the quartered shield, with vegetal ornaments and, under the gilded *umbo*, a red chevron.

G2: Norman armoured *miles*, Moscufo

This soldier, copied from the *ambo* of the church at Moscufo near Pescara on the mainland, displays considerable Eastern Roman influence in his complete scale hauberk made of plates riveted to a backing; the arm and leg protection is made in the same way. More Norman in style is a variant conical helmet, and a typical kite- or almond-shaped shield.

G3: *Miles feudatus terrarius*

Taken from the carved pillar capitals at Monreale, Sicily, this feudal soldier's full mail hauberk with short sleeves is similar to contemporary examples from northern Italy. The Phrygian or conical helmet was probably painted by this date, for both protection against rust and for recognition.



1: Norman *rizico* volunteer
2: Sicilian crossbowman
3: Siculo-Norman baron
4: *Miles stipendiarius*

H1: Norman *rizico* volunteer

This individual mercenary is taken from a hunting scene in the Sta Sophia cloister sculptures in Benevento. He wears what appear to be a felt cap and a long padded fabric tunic, and carries a long shield and a spear. Note the proto-heraldry of his shield; although the colours of the Benevento carvings do not survive, the appearance corresponds with the miniatures of Pietro da Eboli.

H2: Sicilian crossbowman

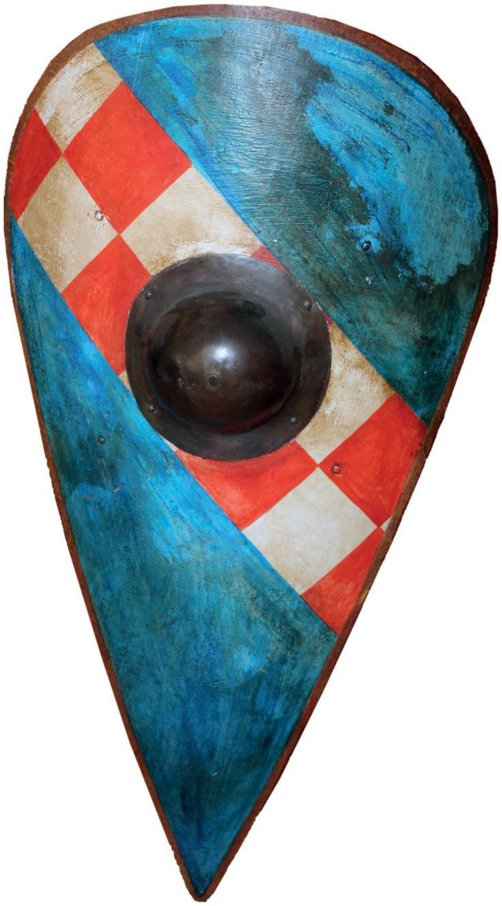
Copied from the *Carmen de Rebus Siculis,* he has a helmet but, strangely, no body armour. In the 12th century the arbelest was still a simple wooden self-bow, with an average span of about 71cm (28in); the bolts had four flights, thick wooden shafts and squared iron heads.

H3: Siculo-Norman baron

Note the painted helmet; this practice, and shield blazons, were responses to the need to identify the *miles* easily on the battlefield. At the end of the 12th century the knight's stirrup-leathers once more grew longer, and although the saddle appears to have been smaller than before, the rider met any impact with his body braced hard back against the cantle and his feet thrust forward.

H4: *Miles stipendiarius*

From the sculptures of St Marcello in Capua (which also show traces of the use of short stirrups). This hired knight's complete padded fabric protection echoes that of Bishop Odo on the Bayeux Tapestry.



Hypothetical reconstruction of a Norman infantry shield of the late 12th century, shorter than that used by the mounted men, with the blazon of the Hauteville family. The 'kite-shaped' shield was in fact known in the Eastern Roman Empire well before the Normans, who simply adapted its dimensions for better protection. (Museum of Norman Civilization, Ariano Irpino; author's photo, courtesy of the Museum)

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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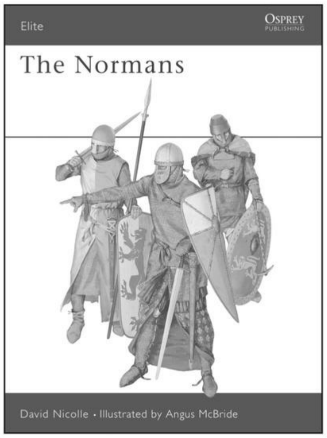
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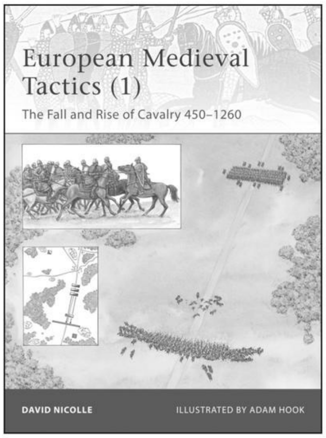
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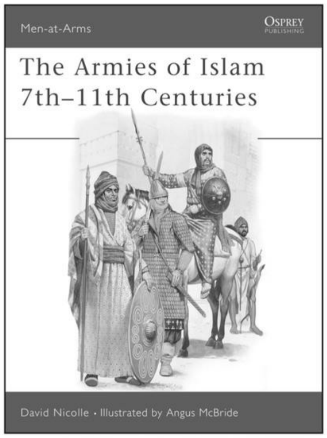
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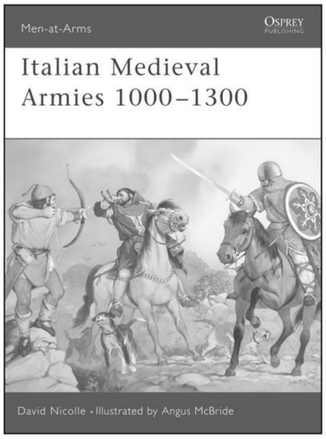
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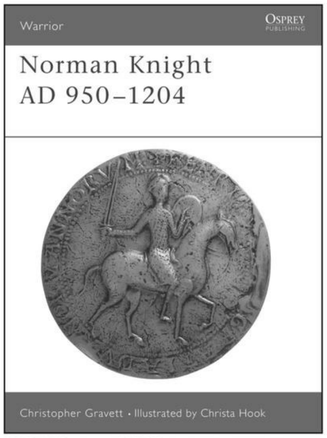
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Finally, this book presents to the ‘Osprey world’ for the second time the wonderful colour artwork of M. Florent Vincent, who has painstakingly followed our complicated instructions in order to recreate the warriors of Norman southern Italy.

Raffaele D’Amato

Artist’s note

Readers may care to note that the original paintings from which the colour plates in this book were prepared are available for private sale. All reproduction copyright whatsoever is retained by the publisher. All enquiries should be addressed to:

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The publishers regret that they can enter into no correspondence upon this matter.